

# 2020 Vision for 2010: Developing Global Competence

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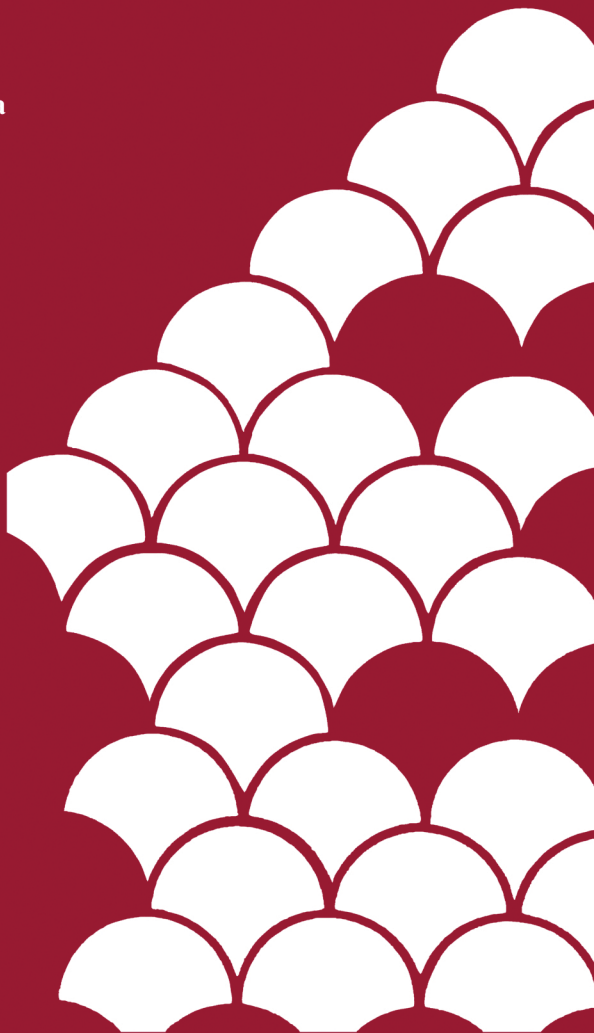
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Pascale Abadie  
Rebecca L. Chism



**2010 Report of the  
Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages**



# **2020 Vision for 2010: Developing Global Competence**

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**Selected Papers from the 2010  
Central States Conference**

**Melanie Bloom, Editor**

University of Nebraska at Omaha

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University of Nebraska at Omaha

**2010 Report of the  
Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages**

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## **Review and Acceptance Procedures Central States Conference *Report***

The Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages *Report* is a refereed volume of selected papers based on the theme and program of the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Abstracts for sessions are first submitted to the Program Chair, who then selects sessions that will be presented at the annual conference. Once the sessions have been selected, presenters are contacted by the editors of the *Report* and invited to submit a manuscript for possible publication in that volume. Copies of the publication guidelines are sent to conference presenters. All submissions are read and evaluated by the editors and one to two other members of the review board. Reviewers are asked to recommend that the article (1) be published in its current form, (2) be published after specific revisions have been made, or (3) not be published. When all of the reviewers' ratings are received, the editors make all final publishing decisions.

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Melanie Bloom  
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# Contents

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Review and Acceptance Procedures .....	iii
Central States Conference Board of Directors 2007-2008 .....	iv
Preface .....	vii
Introduction.....	ix
<b>1 Developing L2 Linguistic Proficiency via Virtual Meetings: Tools and Strategies .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Anita Saalfeld & Nissa Ingraham	
<b>2 The Possibilities and Potential of Podcasting .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Jessica Sertling Miller & Anne Cummings Hlas	
<b>3 Foreign Language Teacher Professional Development: Connecting with the Community through Technology .....</b>	<b>45</b>
Stephanie Dhonau, Rosalie Cheatham, Alan D. Lytle, & Dave McAlpine	
<b>4 Preparing Future Professional Foreign Language Teachers .....</b>	<b>61</b>
Teresa R. eBell	
<b>5 L2 Learning and L2 Teaching: Approximating and Appropriating Language and Culture .....</b>	<b>73</b>
John C. Storm	
<b>6 Can We Learn a Language Without Rules?.....</b>	<b>91</b>
Aleidine J. Moeller & Olha Ketsman	
<b>7 French Tunes 101: A Primer for Staying Abreast of Current Trends in French Music and Exploiting Them for Classroom Use .....</b>	<b>109</b>
Kirsten Halling & Pascale Abadie	
<b>8 Gateways to the World: Rationale for Language Choice .....</b>	<b>125</b>
Rebecca L. Chism	





## Preface

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### 2020 Vision for 2010: Developing Global Competence

The 2010 Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages focused on exploring various ways to lead our students to become part of an internationally competent workforce. Foreign language educators shared their experiences in investigating various modes of assessment, the use of technology, and techniques to motivate students to become proficient users of the target language. Presenters from all 17 states that make up the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages offered a diverse program, including “Best of...” sessions selected by their respective states. Presenters of “All-Star” 2009 sessions, chosen by the CSCTFL Board, were invited to share their expertise again with 2010 conference attendees. There were workshops and sessions for language professionals at all levels and in various languages, including insight into immersion education in Minnesota.

The keynote speaker for the 2010 Conference was Marilyn Carlson Nelson. This internationally recognized executive and authority on authentic leadership shared the secrets of her extraordinary business accomplishments and talked about her rich international experience. The author of *How We Lead Matters: Reflections on a Life of Leadership*, Ms. Nelson was able to help attendees understand how they can be leaders by making a difference in preparing their students for success in the worldwide market place.

The authors of this 2010 *Report* also discuss ways of fostering global competence in foreign language instruction in their contributions to this publication. Readers are asked to reconsider instructional techniques, especially those involving technology, and construct classrooms that exhibit global competence thereby emphasizing language proficiency. In today’s global economy, foreign language skills have become vital to future members of the workforce.

It is our sincere hope that readers of this volume of the *Report* will find the research, theory, data, and anecdotal information useful and that it will continue to refresh their memories and support their efforts as foreign language professionals after the conference.

Mary Goodwin  
2010 Program Chair



# Introduction

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**Melanie Bloom**

**Carolyn Gascoigne**

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This year's volume of the CSCTFL *Report* is entitled *2020 Vision for 2010: Developing Global Competence* and offers a group of articles representing some of the best practices and innovations in language teaching and learning stemming from the 2010 conference. Authors offer insights into developing global competence through subthemes of technological applications to language learning, pre-service teacher preparation, and approaches to teaching language and culture.

## **Global Competence through Technology**

The articles in this section focus on developing both teachers' and students' global competence through the use of technology. As technology can facilitate our participation in the global community, technological competence often leads to the development of students' global competence. In "Developing L2 Linguistic Proficiency via Virtual Meetings: Tools and Strategies," Anita Saalfeld and Nissa Ingraham provide an overview of various forms of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and present a brief history of research on its effectiveness. While concentrating on free resources for teachers, the authors discuss the pros and cons of CALL, as well as share accounts (both from the student and the instructor perspective) from a hybrid, virtual face-to-face class at the post-secondary level. In second article in this section, "The Possibilities and Potential of Podcasting," Jessica Sertling Miller and Anne Cummings Hlas explore the various ways in which teachers can use podcasts both to enhance their language instruction in various language learning contexts and to connect with communities outside the classroom. They adeptly explain how to initiate a podcasting project and present examples of podcasting projects implemented in their French pronunciation, French conversation and composition, and Spanish conversation classes.

## **Global Competence through Pre-Service Teacher Preparation**

The three articles in this section all focus on the importance of preparing pre-service teachers to participate in the language education profession and the global community inherent to this profession. In "Foreign Language Teacher Professional Development: Connecting with the Community through Technology," Stephanie Dhonau, Rosalie Cheatham, Alan D. Lytle, and Dave McAlpine describe one university's response to a state-mandated professional development requirement for classroom teachers by creating a multi-year series of workshops. The aim of the specific workshop described in this paper was to enable participants to use current technologies, such as PowerPoint presentations, podcasts, and iMovies, to create

advocacy projects for their schools and programs. Teresa R. Bell also focuses on the importance of pre-service teachers' professional development in her article, "Preparing Future Professional Foreign Language Teachers." She reviews different models of professional development for pre-service and new foreign language educators and provides examples of how the state of Oklahoma has implemented active mentoring, the communication of good teaching practices, and the participation in professional organizations into its teacher preparation programs. Finally, in "L2 Learning and L2 Teaching: Approximating and Appropriating Language and Culture," John C. Storm presents an innovative portfolio project that can be used in both second language learning and second language teacher preparation contexts. Storm describes the theoretical framework for the portfolio and provides two examples of portfolio projects for both language learners and pre-service language teachers. The goal of these portfolio projects is to connect language learners with the community of target language speakers as well as to integrate pre-service teachers into the community of language teachers.

### **Global Competence through Teaching Language and Culture**

The final section of this volume recognizes the importance of both linguistic and cultural competence in the development of global competence. In "Can We Learn a Language without Rules?" Aleidine Moeller and Olha Ketsman revisit a long-standing debate in language education: Should grammar be taught with or through rules (cognitive, deductive, or conscious learning) or without (associative, or implicit learning)? Following a review of the literature, the authors provide a series of research-based examples of grammar instruction that offers a balanced approach to the topic. Examples are given in French, German, and Spanish. In the next article, "French Tunes 101: A Primer for Staying Abreast of Trends in French Music and Exploiting Them for Classroom Use," Kirsten Halling and Pascale Abadie demonstrate how contemporary French music and musicals, such as *Le Roi Soleil*, can be used as a meaningful and motivating tool to teach French language, literature, history, and culture in the high school and college French curriculum. The authors also offer suggestions for accessing music and lyrics, as well as activities and resources. Finally, Rebecca L. Chism explores the importance of developing high school students' interest and competence in critical languages in "Gateways to the World: Rationale for Language Choice." In this article, Chism describes a foreign language academy designed specifically for high school students interested in studying Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, or Russian. She explores the students' rationales and motivations for choosing to study a critical language in order to better promote language programming in this area.





# 1

## Developing L2 Linguistic Proficiency via Virtual Meetings: Tools and Strategies

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### Introduction

Computer-assisted language learning, or CALL, is a topic that is increasingly receiving more attention, both in language pedagogy and language acquisition research. There are a number of journals dedicated exclusively to themes associated with CALL (*CALICO*, *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, or *CALL*, and *ReCALL*, among others), and many other journals dedicated to second language (L2) acquisition research and pedagogy that publish articles or special issues relevant to CALL. A perusal of conference presentation topics at both applied linguistics and pedagogical conferences, such as the American Association for Applied Linguistics conference and the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, indicates the importance and relevance of CALL to teachers and researchers alike.

There are obviously a number of benefits to CALL, which we will discuss later, but for the typical language teacher, the work required to sift through the volumes of information available is daunting. Many instructors feel that a number of these technologies are gimmicky, or have little or no relevance or place in the classroom. A common fear of many instructors is attempting to use new forms of technology, but not being able to resolve problems that may arise, thus looking foolish or out-of-touch to our students. Furthermore, change occurs so quickly in

the technological realm that once an individual has taken the time to learn a new technology, it may already be outdated.

Additionally, in adapting technologies to the classroom, it is crucial to consider whether or not the technology under consideration will actually be beneficial to learners. A common complaint with respect to technological adoption in any field is that it frequently appears to be adopted solely because it is new and different, and does not necessarily appear to enhance curriculum objectives.

With these issues in mind, we would first like to present a brief summary of research in second language acquisition and pedagogy that indicates areas where CALL has been an effective means of instruction. There are certainly contexts where CALL may be more or less effective, and it is impractical and extremely time-consuming to personally test each of the ways in which CALL can be used to determine its pedagogical efficacy. It is our hope that the summary we present will be useful to teachers in helping determine how they can create activities that will promote language acquisition in their own classes. We will present a brief discussion of some of the many forms of CALL, together with the advantages and disadvantages that may arise from their use. We will also offer a practical guide to using some of these technologies, focusing on those that are available free to teachers. Last, we will present a first-hand account of how we used some of the available technologies to conduct a hybrid online/face-to-face class with weekly meetings. We hope that this summary will be useful to language teachers interested in developing computer-based instructional tools, but who may currently feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of possibilities and steep learning curve required to adopt some of these technologies.

### **CALL: An Overview of Research Findings**

There are a number of studies that have shown beneficial results for CALL in numerous language domains, including structure, vocabulary, pronunciation, and cultural competence. For grammar acquisition, Sanz and Morgan-Short (2004) presented computerized lessons on the use of direct object pronouns in Spanish, and found that all students receiving the computerized lessons improved in their ability to comprehend and use direct object pronouns. Learners that participated in a study by Smith (2004) interacted via a computer network to complete several different types of tasks. Smith's study indicated that computer-based interaction was beneficial in promoting acquisition of target-language vocabulary items. Tanner and Landon (2009) found that ESL learners who participated in a computer-based pronunciation practice program improved in their ability to perceive and produce various features of English, including stress. O'Brien and Levy (2008) investigated the effects of a virtual reality world in a German classroom, and suggest that the use of this type of program is beneficial in creating increased awareness of the target culture.

There are many more studies that could be mentioned here, but for space reasons, we refer the interested reader to the following online journals that do not require a subscription: *CALICO* (<https://calico.org/page.php?id=5>) and *Language Learning & Technology* (<http://llt.msu.edu/>). Other journals that do



require subscriptions that may be of interest include *CALL* (<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/09588221.asp>) and *ReCALL* (<http://www.eurocall-languages.org/recall/index.html>). Finally, readers interested in a summary of CALL research may wish to read Felix's (2008, 2005a, 2005b) articles reviewing the findings of research in CALL.

## **Options, Tools, and Strategies in CALL**

### *Types of CALL*

There are a variety of different forms of CALL, but essentially they can be classified by two criteria: autonomous and non-autonomous. Perhaps the most efficient use of CALL is through autonomous tools; that is, tools that are completely run by a computer, either via the Internet or installed on an individual PC. On the other hand, there are also non-autonomous uses of CALL; in other words, instances where a real person must also participate in the language learning activity or process in some way, such as giving instruction, monitoring progress, or giving feedback. The other criterion for classifying forms of CALL is whether the activity or tool is synchronous or asynchronous. Synchronous media allow participation, interaction, and/or feedback in real time, whereas asynchronous forms of CALL involve lag time between interactions and/or receipt of feedback after submission of an activity or assignment. We will discuss advantages and disadvantages of using various forms of CALL in more detail, but it is immediately evident that when a computer can provide feedback for some activities, it frees instructors to concentrate on other aspects of language that may have been overlooked or neglected in the past due to time constraints. If CALL is both autonomous and synchronous (which is the case with most if not all autonomous forms of CALL), it can be extremely useful, since it immediately frees up instructor time and provides learners with instant feedback. In fact, for activities where CALL is appropriate, CALL feedback may be considered superior to instructor feedback, in the sense that it can provide instant feedback to a virtually unlimited number of students simultaneously. In effect, each learner has his or her own private tutor who responds instantly to learner questions.

The apparent efficacy of autonomous forms of CALL frequently gives rise to alarmist predictions that computers will replace foreign language instructors completely at some point in time. After all, if a computer is able to serve as a private tutor to a potentially unlimited number of students, why would we need a person teaching a class? However, as all language teachers know, a computer is not an effective substitute for a real person. Currently, while computers do a reasonable job producing gisted translations (that is, translations in which the main idea is generally conveyed, though not always in grammatically or lexically accurate ways), we have yet to hear of a language teacher who does not warn students of the perils of relying too heavily on automated translators. I'm fond of telling my students that the machine does not actually have a brain, and therefore I'm immediately able to judge whether a piece of writing was created with the assistance of a brain, or without it. While autonomous forms of CALL can be

extremely beneficial for learning verb forms, working on building vocabulary, and other discrete item tasks, non-autonomous forms of CALL (or language instruction in general) are unquestionably better for working on discourse-level skills, whether oral or written. Presumably, the goal of learning a second language is to be able to communicate effectively with humans (not computers); therefore, for our students to learn to do this, they need to have practice communicating with real people.

### *Free Tools for Autonomous Synchronous CALL*

There are a number of tools that can be used for all forms of CALL, and to describe them all would be the work of a book rather than an article. Furthermore, by the time a book actually would be published, half of the technologies would probably be obsolete. Therefore, we are offering a brief overview of some of the tools that we have found useful in our own experience as language teachers and students.

Perhaps the most obvious forms of autonomous synchronous CALL are websites such as [www.quia.com](http://www.quia.com) and [www.conjuguemos.com](http://www.conjuguemos.com). (Caveat: With [www.conjuguemos.com](http://www.conjuguemos.com), you can use the site and create activities for free, but if you want to use it to track student grades, the price is \$35/school, plus \$5/teacher using the site. For [www.quia.com](http://www.quia.com), your students can access activities without registering or paying, but if you wish to create activities, it is \$49/instructor for a year of access.) For Spanish, there are a number of websites with online practice activities, such as [www.studyspanish.com](http://www.studyspanish.com) and <http://www.colby.edu/~bknelson/SLC/>. To find these kinds of sites, a Google search using the terms “learn Spanish online free” (substitute Spanish with the language you teach) is useful.

If you have access to a Course/Learning Management System (CMS/LMS), this is another option for creating autonomous synchronous CALL activities. Many schools use sites such as Blackboard, and in addition to posting content to the site, instructors can also create online quizzes that can be tracked and graded. Again, an important caveat is that these systems are not free; however, if your institution has purchased access to a CMS, this is an option that is generally easy to implement. Furthermore, if your school has purchased access to the program, there is generally a support person or team available to help you in designing online activities.

The drawback for all of these types of sites is that while they may provide impressive online practice activities (or the ability to create online practice activities), they are not free, or the free version does not allow you to track student progress and record student grades. There are other platforms, such as Moodle, that can be used to set up a course and create activities, but these generally require an administrator with programming knowledge. A brief search revealed one free site where instructors can set up online classes and create graded activities: [www.eduslide.net](http://www.eduslide.net). This site is fairly easy to navigate and does not require any programming language in order to be able to set up activities. The activity types allowed are more limited than for sites that require pay access (it does not appear to support images in quizzes, for example), but in general it

offers many customization options, and is completely free. Instructors can decide whether to make their classes public or private, or even whether they want to charge for access to a course.

As we have stated, these types of activities are ideal for discrete grammar points and vocabulary learning, which will generally tend to be for lower-level language learners. For more complex language issues such as writing and speaking, researchers and programmers are developing programs that can “read” papers and give feedback, or “listen” to speech and give feedback. A recent issue of the journal *CALICO* (Volume 26, Number 3) is devoted entirely to automated programs that parse written and oral language and provide feedback to learners. Currently, this research is still in the early stages of development, and these types of programs are being developed and tested to judge their overall efficacy in providing correction and feedback. In the next five to ten years, it is probable that these programs will become increasingly common, as well as increasingly accurate in their ability to detect errors and provide feedback. At this point, however, they do not appear to be sufficiently developed to be useful in the average foreign language course.

One more tool that is not free, but that is widely available and frequently under-used, is Spelling and Grammar Check in Microsoft Word. While not free, access is widely available via public computers, including school and library computer labs. Less commonly taught languages may not be available for installation, but typically English, Spanish, French, and other western European languages come with the basic version of Word and only need to be installed. While this resource may seem painfully obvious to language teachers, many students are unaware that they can perform spelling and grammar checks in languages other than English. After completing a senior-level composition class at a Midwestern university, a Spanish major e-mailed her instructor (one of the co-authors) expressing her gratitude for presenting basic tools and strategies for self-editing such as Spelling and Grammar Check in Microsoft Word. Unfortunately, the student had already completed all of the required Spanish courses, and did not learn about these tools until her last semester in college. Language teachers will of course need to warn students that the use of Spelling and Grammar Check is not an adequate substitute for careful proofreading; however, a judicious use of these resources will help students become aware of frequent grammatical and spelling errors. In particular, in languages such as Spanish and French with noun gender, a grammar check will catch a number of agreement errors and will prompt students to make the necessary corrections.

### *Free Tools for Non-Autonomous Synchronous CALL*

For forms of non-autonomous CALL, there are numerous excellent free options. However, as we have noted, these require instructor involvement in the learning process, so there is a continuous time commitment. Below, we present a description of our personal experiences using some of these tools in a classroom setting. One of the main tools that we used was Adobe Connect. This platform is available free at <http://www.acrobat.com>; however, it must be noted that the free version can only be used on up to three computers. Therefore, if you had a

virtual meeting with four participants in four different locations, this tool would not be ideal. (Adobe Connect does, of course, have a version that allows for more participants. There are two pricing options for more advanced versions: \$149/year or \$14.99/month, and \$390/year or \$39/month.) In order to use the program, the instructor for the course will need to set up an account to create a virtual meeting room. This can be done by clicking the red link that says “Sign up!” that pops up on the entrance page (link provided above).

You can also launch Adobe Connect directly from your desktop. To use the desktop application, go to <http://get.adobe.com/air/otherversions/>, select your Operating System, and click “Download.” You will need to have the most recent version of the Adobe Reader in order for this to work correctly. In order to download the most recent Adobe Reader, go to <http://get.adobe.com/reader/?promoid=BUIGO>. Once you’ve downloaded and installed both of these programs, there should be an icon on your desktop that says “Acrobat.com.” If you double-click this icon, it will open the Acrobat.com menu directly onto your desktop. (You will still have to be able to connect to the Internet to use its functions.)

Once the instructor has set up a meeting room, he or she can send the link to other class participants, who can then enter without having an account. When you log in to Adobe Connect, there will be a box that pops up with the link to the meeting site, and you can either copy and paste the link into a message, or use the supplied link entitled “Send Email Invitation Now” to e-mail the link to participants (this option requires that Outlook be configured on your computer).

When you close the pop-up box, you’ll see the screen as displayed in Figure 1 on the next page. In the main part of the screen, you have the option to share your screen, and at the right, you can initiate a webcam, do a text chat, or type notes about the meeting that you and other users can save directly into a new document by clicking on the button with the disk icon (“Save”). This will save the notes in a Word .doc file. In the text chat box, you can enter text messages that are delivered to other participants in real time. This is a particularly useful feature if you’re giving a one-way presentation (where the host’s speech is broadcast to other participants, but other participants are not broadcast back to the host), or if you have difficulties with voice chatting.

At the top of the screen, there are three boxes with drop-down menus, entitled “Meeting,” “Pods,” and “Help.” The drop-down menu under the “Meeting” tab will allow you to invite participants, share your computer screen, upload files to share with other participants, start broadcasting your webcam, change your preferences, end the meeting, and sign out of Adobe Connect (menu is displayed in Figure 2 on the next page). It is worth noting that several of these menu options can be found elsewhere within Adobe Connect. For example, there is an option to share your computer screen in the middle of the page, under the “Meeting” menu, or as an icon at the top of the screen (the computer screen icon starts the screen share).

Figure 1. Screen Shot of Adobe Connect.



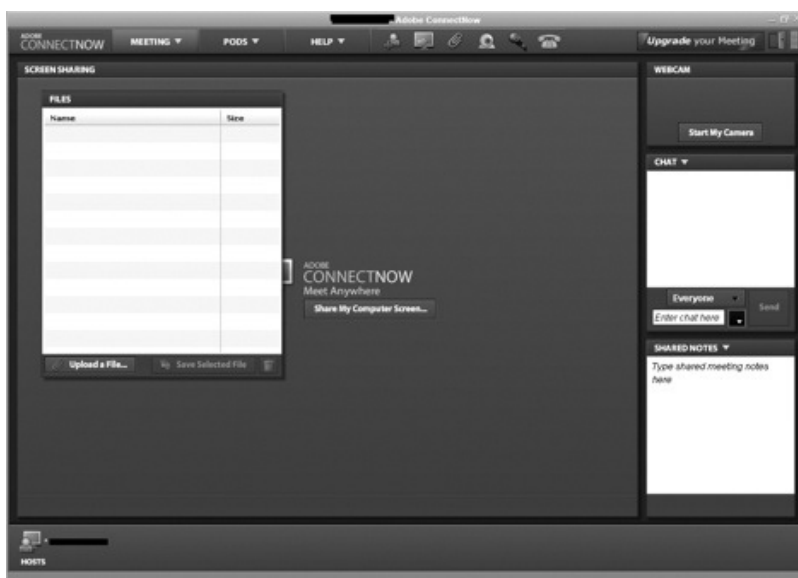
Figure 2. Meeting Menu in Adobe Connect.



To share your screen with participants, click the box that says “Share My Computer Screen...” located in the middle of the page. A menu will pop up asking if you’d like to share your desktop, an open window, or an open application. Sharing your desktop will allow participants to see your screen exactly as you see it (it’s important to not have personal files or e-mails open if you choose this option). If you choose to share windows or applications, Adobe Connect will present a list of open windows and applications; choose which one you’d like to share and click “Share.” In our own meetings, I always shared my desktop because I used several different programs to conduct our class meetings. Sharing my desktop allowed me to click back and forth between them without having to manually change the application I was sharing; however, if you just plan to use one application such as PowerPoint, you may want to choose to share only that application.

To upload and share files, you can either select “Upload a file” under the “Meeting” menu, or go to the “Pods” menu and click “Files.” This will open the file upload pod shown in Figure 3. To upload a file, click the “Upload a File...” button and find the file you would like to upload. Once you have uploaded the file, participants may open it or may choose to save it to their computers by clicking “Save Selected File.” To discard a file, highlight it and then click the garbage can icon in the lower right corner.

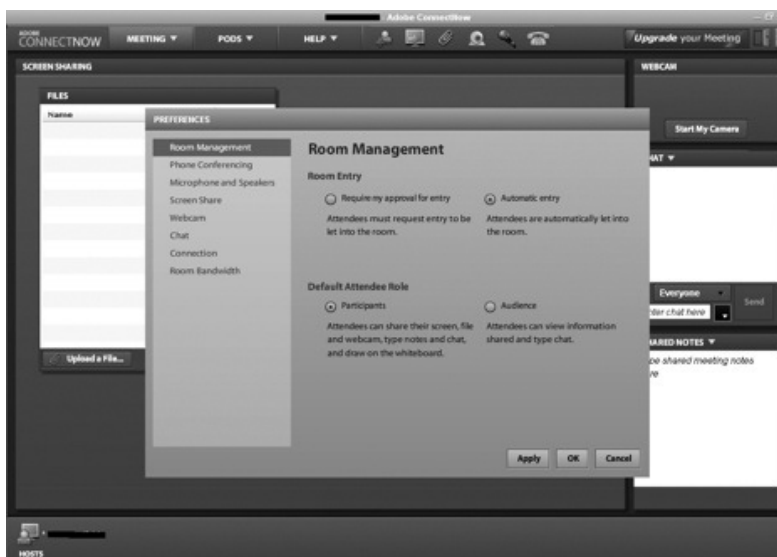
**Figure 3.** File Upload Pod.



There are a variety of options for using Adobe Connect under the “Preferences” menu, shown in Figure 4. In general, if you are not technologically savvy, the best option is to continue using the default settings. However, there are a few things

that you may wish to change. If you want other participants to be able to interact with you (including doing screen and file shares, typing notes, and chatting), you should set their role to “participants.” If you select the “audience” role, participants will only be able to see what you have shared, and will be able to text chat, but will not be able to share their own screens or files. In addition, you may wish to adjust the “Chat” options. You can allow private chats between other participants, or only allow one main chat that is visible to all participants. Depending on how you’re using Adobe Connect, you may want to enable or disable the private chat feature.

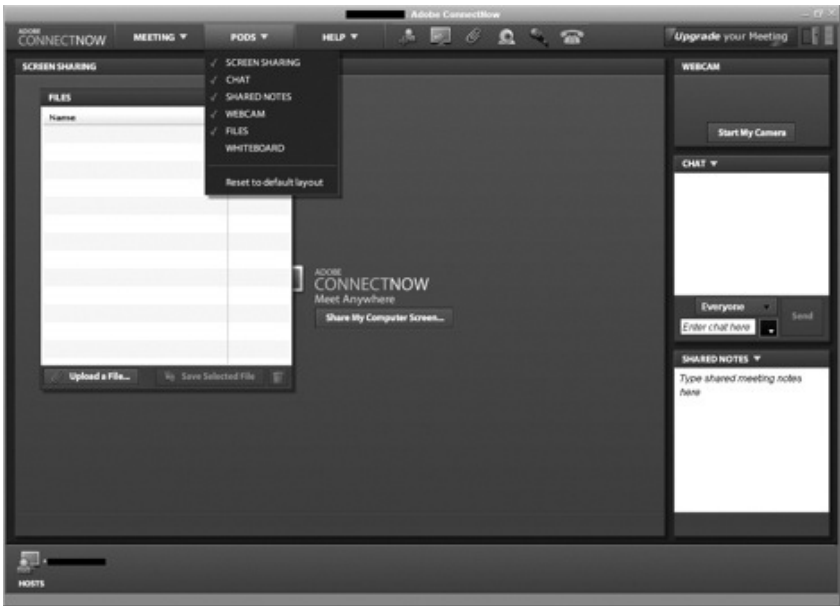
**Figure 4.** Preferences Menu.



The “Pods” menu shown in Figure 5 on the next page contains a list of the different tools available for use in Adobe Connect, which are presented in boxes called pods. If you accidentally close one of the boxes, such as the “Shared Notes” box or the “Screen Sharing” box, you can open it again by going to the “Pods” menu and clicking on it. The default pods are “Screen Sharing,” “Shared Notes,” “Chat,” and “Webcam;” however, you can close any of these or open the two remaining pods “Files” (for uploading and sharing files) and “Whiteboard” (a virtual whiteboard) by checking or un-checking the pod name in the drop-down “Pods” menu.

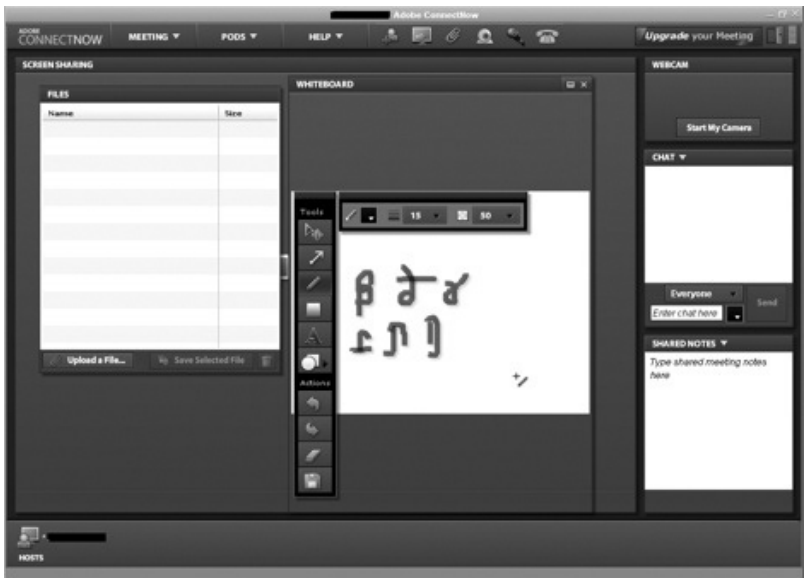
The “Whiteboard” pod (Figure 6, next page) will allow you to draw in the Whiteboard area using your mouse (or a stylus if you have a tablet PC). This feature may be particularly useful if you wish to use symbols that require special fonts, such as phonetic symbols. Although a screen share will enable participants to see the appropriate symbols (provided that any required fonts are installed on the host’s computer), if they wish to access it later, the symbols will not display

**Figure 5.** Pods Menu.



properly unless they have also installed the required fonts. The Whiteboard pod allows you and participants the option of saving the images for later access.

**Figure 6.** Whiteboard.





Skype is a program that allows you to conduct text chats or voice chats, with or without video, via a computer connection rather than a telephone connection. Interactions from one computer to another computer are free, but Skype also allows you to make calls from computer to telephone for a relatively small fee. To use Skype, you'll need to download it to your desktop; the URL is <http://www.skype.com/download/skype/windows/downloading/>. Once you've downloaded Skype, you will need to set up an account and start adding contacts. The search function is not always effective since users are not required to give their names, so the easiest way is to have contacts give you their Skype names so that you can add them. If your computer does not have a built-in microphone or did not come with an external microphone, you will need to purchase a microphone before you can use Skype. Any computer microphone will work fine, including headset microphones. Regular PC microphones can be purchased for around \$10 at stores such as Target and Wal-Mart, as well as electronics stores such as Best Buy. Headset microphones are a little more expensive, but can usually be purchased for \$20-30.

There are a number of ways that instructors and learners can use Skype. In our case, we used it to conduct our weekly class meetings. At our designated class time, either the long-distance student called the instructor via Skype, or the instructor called the long-distance student. As mentioned above, Adobe Connect also has a VOIP feature, but we found that it was slower than talking via Skype, so we decided to use Adobe Connect for screen and document sharing, and Skype for talking. Skype allows for conference calls for up to five people; instructions on how to set up a conference call are on the Skype website. To find the instructions, go to <https://support.skype.com/> and type "How do I start a conference call?" in the search box. On the results page, click the title "How do I start a conference call?"

In addition to using Skype to conduct class meetings, instructors can also use Skype to create partnerships between their students and students in the target culture. The easiest way to do this is to establish a connection with a teacher in the target-language community who is teaching English (or another subject in which students may need to know or use English). This may be difficult depending on the distance between the two countries; if time zones are dramatically different, it will obviously be much harder to coordinate. For instructors considering creating this type of partnership but who don't know how to establish an overseas connection, one suggestion is to contact a TESL/TEFL program at a local university. Instructors or students in the program will probably know ESL/EFL instructors in various countries who are willing to collaborate with a partner in the United States.

Two final synchronous non-autonomous tools that students may enjoy using are instant messaging and text messaging. Instant messaging can be done through a number of free programs, such as MSN Instant Messenger, America Online Instant Messenger (AIM), Google Talk, Yahoo Instant Messenger, Skype, and more. For all of these, students will need to download the application and create a user profile if they have not done so already. The advantage of these programs, however, is that many students are already using them. There are a number of

ways these applications can be used. First, instant messaging programs can be used to conduct virtual office hours or tutoring sessions. This will depend on the individual instructor's preference, of course, but creating a virtual environment where students can come to ask questions has been a very effective tool in our experience. Students who may not feel comfortable attending an instructor's regular office hours or asking for help during class may be more likely to interact with the instructor in an online environment. A key factor in the use of this technology, in our opinion, is to be online when students are likely to be studying. This will probably be afternoon or evening in most cases, so some instructors will not want to adopt this strategy. In addition to providing help to current students, one of the benefits of using instant messaging for online office hours is that former students are more likely to make contact and ask for help with language issues, or simply let their instructor know what they're doing with the language. Not every instructor may want to maintain this contact with former students, but in our experience, it is extremely rewarding to have a former student drop by your "virtual office" to let you know that he or she is currently completing a study abroad program in the target culture, for example.

Another use of instant messaging programs that an instructor in our language program has implemented is having students instant message each other during a designated laboratory day. In this case, the class was a composition course, and students were learning to write in a variety of different genres. Since instant messaging is a genre that students use regularly, it was a logical step to incorporate it into a second-language writing course. Another option is to require an instant-message conversation as a homework assignment; this could easily be evaluated by having all students copy and paste the transcript of their conversations in an e-mail or Word document and then submit it to the instructor.

Finally, instructors may wish to make use of students' frequent urge to send text messages during class or other inappropriate times. We have one word of caution here: While the majority of students do have cell phones with unlimited text messaging capabilities, not all do, so this technology would be best used as one of several options for completing a task. The same assignment for instant messaging could be employed with text messaging; instead of having students copy and paste the transcripts, they could add the instructor's e-mail address as a recipient on the text message, or forward it to the instructor's e-mail address after sending it. Brave instructors may wish to give students their cell phone numbers; however, we would not recommend this option for obvious reasons.

#### *Free Tools for Non-Autonomous Asynchronous CALL*

One of the most common tools for non-autonomous asynchronous CALL is e-mail. Like Spelling and Grammar Check in Microsoft Word, this may seem so glaringly obvious that it is not worth mentioning. However, requiring students to send e-mail in the target language, either to each other with a copy to the instructor (using the cc: line), or to the instructor, is a valuable tool that can help learners to develop socially appropriate communication skills in the target language (and perhaps in the native language as well). As more and more students

send e-mail using their cell phones, it becomes increasingly important to establish norms for communication in various contexts. In our experience, numerous students are arriving at the university without having learned how to compose a socially-appropriate e-mail message (either in the first language or the second language). Incorporating this type of lesson in the language classroom not only builds students' linguistic competence in the target language, but also equips them for personal and professional interactions outside of the classroom in their native language.

Instructors may also wish to incorporate social networking sites such as Facebook or any of the various blogging sites into their instruction. If instructors do choose to incorporate Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) into their classrooms, we recommend that it be optional. There are still a few students who have not joined Facebook, and others may not wish to use a social site for school purposes. However, it is a convenient place for students to interact because many of them are already Facebook users. Probably the simplest way to monitor students' target language use is to create a Facebook group for your class and invite your students to join, making sure to note that it is optional. Whether or not students actually use the Facebook group will depend on each individual student group. One instructor in our program has used this strategy fairly successfully during one semester, but in the following semester, students enrolled in her classes were not interested in participating.

Blogs are receiving an increasing amount of attention as a strategy for developing writing skills in the target language. A recent article by Ducate and Lomicka (2008) indicates that students responded positively to maintaining individual blogs for their foreign language courses. In particular, students reported that blogging promoted ownership and creativity, allowed them to experiment with the target language, and facilitated relationships with other students. From a pedagogical point of view, regular writing assignments are crucial to developing writing competence in the second language, and a blog offers the opportunity for students to use an authentic medium of communication for second-language writing. In addition, blog hosting sites that support the addition of photos, and audio and video files enable learners to practice using the target language in a variety of different media. We are currently piloting a blog component in several courses at different levels, and have included our grading rubrics in the Appendices. Some popular blog sites include <http://www.blogger.com> and <http://www.wordpress.com>.

Document creation and sharing sites such as Google documents (<http://docs.google.com>) and wikis present an ideal option for group projects and long-distance collaborations. (Some popular wiki hosting sites include <http://www.yourwiki.net>, <http://www.wikia.com>, <http://www.intodit.com>, and <http://pbworks.com/academic.wiki>. The last wiki site appears to be intended for academic use. For more information about wikis, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>). Since the documents are stored on the Internet, anyone who is working on the document is doing so in real time, so that no one is wasting time working on an older version of the document. In addition, Google documents and wiki sites track what features

have been edited, and who has edited them (provided that this feature is enabled), so that instructors can immediately see who has participated in the creation and revision of the document. This is especially useful in light of one of the most common complaints about group work; namely, that one or two students always end up doing the majority of the work, and the students who don't participate receive the same grade.

One final site that may be useful is a survey site, such as <http://www.surveymonkey.com>. These kinds of sites are ideal for collecting anonymous learner feedback about courses and assignments, but could also be adapted for use to make short quizzes, provided that one of the required fields is a fill-in-the-blank section requiring students to give their name in order to submit. However, this type of activity would probably be better performed on a site such as [www.eduslide.net](http://www.eduslide.net), mentioned above, that allows more administrative controls, such as tracking and grading student responses and allowing students to redo an activity.

### *Advantages, Disadvantages, and Factors to Consider*

We hope that the possibilities for engaging learners through CALL have been made clear in our discussion of the options available for instructors and learners. Before we present our own experience in a hybrid virtual/face-to-face class, we would like to highlight some important factors to consider when incorporating technology into language instruction.

As we have already mentioned, one of the clear advantages of autonomous forms of CALL is the fact that they allow instructors to devote more time to other activities. However, these forms of CALL need to be approached with caution, especially in language instruction. We presume that the goal of language instruction is that students are able to communicate in the target language *with humans*; therefore, completely automating language instruction would be an unconscionable disservice to our students, because it deprives them of the opportunity to interact with humans. Furthermore, although machines have tremendous processing capacity, they do not have brains or emotions, and therefore cannot communicate to students the implications of phrases or errors. An entirely automated language course would perhaps be suitable for studying a dead language, such as Latin, but for studying modern languages, it is critical that students have the opportunity to interact in real time with the instructor and other students. This may or may not require that students be physically present, given the capabilities of current forms of technology. But it is nonetheless essential that students continue to be exposed to the target language via regular class meetings.

As we note below, one somewhat unexpected advantage that arose through our virtual meetings was that this environment improved listening comprehension. Because there were no gestures or body language to accompany speech, all participants had to closely attend to the speech itself. Online and virtual classes frequently have the reputation of being easier than their face-to-face counterparts, but in this case, a virtual meeting was extremely beneficial in challenging and refining listening comprehension skills.

Many of the options we have presented can be adopted at almost any level of language instruction, and can be used either to supplement instruction, as homework assignments, or to deliver instruction. In the first two cases, the changes to an existing course structure are relatively minor, and in our opinion may be tested for effectiveness without worrying about adverse effects to learners. However, for instructors or programs planning to implement online or hybrid classes, it is important to consider the level of the language learners, and the degree to which automatization of learning or long-distance instruction is appropriate. For example, although instructors can now conduct regular class meetings in a virtual environment, a beginning classroom is not an ideal level to migrate entirely to a virtual format. Any kind of jigsaw task would be considerably more difficult, and it would also be extremely difficult for instructors to “walk around the room” virtually to ensure that students are completing interactive tasks and monitor students’ facial expressions to discern whether they understand a particular concept or not. At a more advanced level, a completely virtual course would be more appropriate since learners will possess a basic knowledge of the target language at that point, but it still may be difficult depending on the activities required by each particular class. Therefore, before deciding to move a class to an entirely online format, the instructor and students will benefit greatly if the instructor considers the goals of the course and the activities that he or she needs to use in order to achieve those goals. If the activities cannot be adapted to an online environment, the course is probably not a good candidate for an online-only class.

A crucial consideration in implementing any new component to a course is time. Autonomous forms of CALL result in enormous time-savings to instructors in terms of grading, but the time required to create sound activities is considerable. In this case, it may be useful to form a partnership with another instructor in the same language and share activities. If you are both using the same programs or platforms, this will be considerably easier, but even if not, you can create a Word document of the activity and share it with other instructors to incorporate into their own platforms or programs. If a team of instructors collaborated on the development of an online course component, each instructor could develop activities for one book chapter or one theme, which is relatively manageable.

Another time consideration is the time it takes to learn to use new programs and platforms. The tools we have presented here are those that we believe to be largely user-friendly, and require little training time (though this will depend on each individual’s knowledge and experience with technological applications to a degree). However, there is always a time commitment involved in working with new programs, no matter how user-friendly, and it is important to consider this factor when implementing new technologies. In addition to the instructor’s time, student time is also an issue. Even if the instructor gradually implements the use of new programs and platforms, a student enrolled in the course will experience all of them at once. Therefore, it may not be wise to require the use of multiple programs and platforms in one class. (In addition, the instructor is typically the *de facto* technical support provider for technological issues arising in his or her class.

The use of a number of different programs and platforms will almost certainly increase the amount of time an instructor spends providing technical support to students.)

If you decide to create automated lessons and activities, a critical factor to consider is whether those lessons and activities will be transferable to new programs or platforms should the current ones become obsolete. While it is impossible to predict the future, and we should not be prevented from implementing new technologies from a crippling fear of obsolescence, instructors may want to wait before implementing new technologies into the classroom. There are undoubtedly brave, bold instructors who do not mind experimenting with technological applications and discarding them if they do not work well or become obsolete, but we believe that most language teachers do not want to invest large amounts of time in the development of new activities and materials, only to have them become outdated or obsolete within a relatively short period of time. By waiting to see which new technologies “stick,” so to speak, teachers concerned with the time commitment required to develop new activities will be better able to gauge whether certain technologies are worth incorporating into the classroom or not.

Lastly, although the majority of students have easy access to a computer and the Internet, not all do. In particular, students enrolled in K-12 schools, at community colleges, and in metropolitan colleges and universities may not have a computer or Internet access at home. Still, students will often have access to computers and the Internet using a school laboratory. However, instructors must consider this factor when creating assignments; while a traditional paper-and-pencil assignment may reasonably be assigned for class the following day, online assignments should be announced and available for completion well in advance of the due date.

### **Firsthand Accounts from One Hybrid Virtual/Face-to-Face Class**

#### *Student Perspective*

Learning through the technology that we used in our Spanish class was positive in terms of time savings, amount of technological support systems, and convenience. I wanted to obtain a Masters of Arts in Spanish Language Teaching, but due to my remote location and my family situation, driving to and from a campus that offered the program was not feasible. The University of Nebraska at Omaha was the university closest to my home that offered the program, but it still posed a two and a half hour drive time. I inquired about completing courses over the Internet and was told that it had not been done with any regularity. One professor, however, who was offering an independent study did agree to try offering a course to me via Skype and Adobe Connect. This enabled me to avoid the long drive to the campus, yet take part fully in the course.

Thankfully, I was familiar with Skype, as was the professor. Coordinating the first meeting via email was important so that we knew each other's Skype names. During the first class we did not use Adobe Connect. It was, however, implemented in subsequent class meetings. During the first trial we tried using



both components, audio and document sharing, but found that the audio suffered a significant delay. Therefore, we decided to use the Skype audio and the Adobe Connect document sharing. This proved to be a good combination, allowing me to interact fully in the class.

Having had prior experience with Skype and with teaching over fiberoptic systems, I understood that there would be technological difficulties from time to time during the semester. Much to my surprise, the difficulties were minimal. I did experience a time delay periodically in relation to the audio, but when that occurred, I simply tried to not offer as much feedback, and let the professor know of the situation. Another problematic situation was trying to log into Adobe Connect for the first time. Having never worked with the system before, I was not familiar with login procedures. The professor and I were hooked up through Skype, and she was able to talk me through the procedure.

Initially, I was fearful that I would not get as much out of the course academically as with traditional face-to-face courses. Exactly the opposite was true. By being on the computer, and not having nonverbal cues to help guide my understanding of the target language, I was forced to pay careful and constant attention to the professor and other students in the class. The absence of nonverbal cues, I felt, increased my target language proficiency as well as kept me focused during each session. Having Adobe Connect also encouraged my engagement because I was able to follow along with the professor and all of the activities such as PowerPoint presentations and group work. The final component that enriched this experience was being able to meet with the class in person for our final meeting. It was interesting to be able to see the faces of the individuals with whom I had been conversing.

This was an extremely rewarding experience for me. I feel that I gained a great amount of language proficiency during the course, as well as content knowledge. It was the first time for me to be a student in a course of this kind, but I would take a course such as this in the future and encourage others trying to gain language proficiency to take a language course in this venue. I feel I increased my language proficiency, my content knowledge, and my technology skills by taking part in this course.

### *Teacher Perspective*

I complete a large number of surveys on technology uses, and one recurring question is whether I consider myself an early adopter of technology. When I stopped to think about this question, I realized that the answer is actually “no.” I jokingly tell friends and family that I’m only an early adopter of free technology, which is true to some extent, but in reality, I have noticed that although I am enthusiastic about the applications of new technologies in the classroom, I am cautious about using my classroom to experiment with new technologies. I have now attended many conference sessions on how to incorporate Twitter into the classroom, for example, but although it looks intriguing to me, I have not been convinced that it is an effective pedagogical tool. Moreover, I am certain that for many instructors, it is being used effectively but I fear that if I were to adopt it, my

students would complain and think I was making a pathetic attempt to be “cool” and relevant. (Some teachers naturally have the gift of being “cool” and relevant, but I have never been one of them!) I mention these considerations for several reasons. First, it is fine for you as a language teacher to be skeptical of new technologies, especially when your skepticism arises from concern about their pedagogical effectiveness. I generally want to see evidence of effectiveness before I adopt a new technology in my classroom. That doesn’t mean that I’m never willing to experiment, but as is the case with any teacher, my time is limited, so when I consider making substantial changes to my teaching, I want to be reasonably certain that they’re changes for the better. Second, as every teacher knows, what works for one teacher may not work for another one. Therefore, it’s important to consider not only how effective the technology is, but also how it will mesh with your own teaching style, personality, schedule, and other considerations. For example, I was a very early adopter of online office hours, which I always hold after 9:00 p.m. (only one night per week). Many colleagues have asked me how I can stand to have office hours at night, but in reality, it’s not a sacrifice for me at all. I work best at night, and I realized that I was always sitting in front of my computer at a time when students might actually be studying. When I considered the potential advantages of students having instant access and feedback at a time when they were actually studying, and how little a difference it would make to my own existing schedule, I decided to try it. I still don’t have any hard evidence of effectiveness, but it’s a small change that doesn’t cost me anything, so to speak, and might have considerable benefits for students. (From a Machiavellian perspective, for those at colleges and universities where continuing employment depends on satisfactory student evaluations, it is worth noting that these types of changes may be of considerable use in helping shape student perception of the instructor’s willingness and availability to help them.)

The first time a student asked me to offer a course via independent study online, I politely refused the request. As we discussed in our consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of CALL, one of the elements of CALL that is almost a guarantee is an increased initial investment of time to develop a new course or activity. Even though I was a fairly experienced user and developer of various forms of CALL at that time, I knew that offering the course via an online format would require more time than I currently had. However, the following semester my schedule was less hectic, and I had two different students approach me about doing an independent study. Both of them expressed an interest in working on their grammatical proficiency (which was already fairly good, since both of them had been admitted into a master’s program for language teachers). One of them lived in the same city as the university, but the other one lived several hours away, and was not able to physically attend a weekly meeting during the regular school year due to the drive time involved. Obviously, I wanted to have one weekly meeting rather than have the same meeting twice, so I checked to make sure that the students would be comfortable in a hybrid virtual/face-to-face meeting. Both students agreed, so we proceeded.



My initial plan was to post the PowerPoint presentations for the class on Blackboard and then work through them using Skype to refer to the slide I was currently discussing. However, before the semester started, I participated in a pilot of a new software program that my university was adopting called Adobe Connect. As we discussed above, Adobe Connect has a number of great features that make it ideal for virtual meetings, including the ability to upload documents to a site, and the ability to screen share, where another person can see exactly what's on your computer screen. Best of all, as we have already noted, Adobe Connect has a free version that can be run on up to three computers, which worked perfectly for our meetings. While it certainly would have been feasible to audibly indicate a change to another slide, it would also have had the potential of creating a considerable amount of confusion. For example, in the traditional classroom when I use multimedia tools such as a computer and a document camera, I frequently forget to switch the projector back to the one I'm currently using. Since I can see both of them, I assume my students can too, and they regularly inform me that I forgot to switch the projector. The ability to share my screen in a virtual meeting, then, is invaluable, because I know exactly what the student is seeing, and the student knows that they're always on the right slide. It considerably reduces the possibility of misunderstanding, and allows for an efficient presentation of new material since the instructor does not have to continually check to verify that the student is on the right slide. In the present case, I do not believe that this would have been an issue since the learners had advanced proficiency in Spanish, but with less proficient learners, this is a crucial consideration.

Additionally, one issue that I did not foresee in my original plan was the ability to work on practice activities during class. In a traditional classroom setting, I generally put the practice activity on the document camera and ask students to give me the answers, which I then write in. Students that may have had the incorrect answer (or have a misspelling or other type of error) have the opportunity to see the form and make a correction on their own copy of the activity. As with the PowerPoint presentations, I originally planned to upload all of the practice activities to Blackboard, and work through them aloud to ensure comprehension, since my students were at a fairly high level of oral proficiency. Again, this would have been an option, but the ability to share my screen was especially useful for this kind of activity. I was able to open each activity on my desktop and work through them with both students. As we worked through activities, I typed in the answers, and both students were able to see the correct responses.

Perhaps one of the most important ideas that I realized as a result of this course is that not all web-based classes are created equal. My typical reaction to the idea of an online class has been a derisive dismissal, because the predominant model for these courses is self-paced instruction, with an instructor who generally oversees the class and responds to e-mail, but whom the students may never actually talk to. This may be effective for other types of courses (although even there, I admit to having doubts), but for a language class, while it is sometimes necessary due to budget limitations, it is certainly not optimal in terms of maximizing student exposure to the target language. As we have discussed, there are a number of

activities that can be moved to an autonomous format and the move is beneficial. However, if the goal is to promote proficiency in the ability to actually use the language, our students need to interact with real human speakers, not a computer. The advantage of the type of class that we held was precisely that: while it was not necessary to be physically present (one of the key advantages to CALL), *it was still necessary to attend regular class meetings*. Thus, although the form of exposure was a little different from that of a traditional classroom, students received the same number of contact hours that they would have received in a regular course, and they were able to interact in real time with each other and with the instructor. As one of the students noted above, this type of meeting was actually beneficial in further developing her listening comprehension skills, because it took away all forms of non-verbal communication.

There are several practical considerations that should be mentioned here. First, as was noted in the student perspective, we attempted to streamline our use of virtual tools by just using Adobe Connect's VOIP feature for one class meeting. However, there was a relatively large lag-time in the transmission of voice communication, such that carrying on a conversation was difficult. This may have been due to individual machine capabilities and not the program itself, but we did not experience the same issue with Skype. Because of this, we continued using both tools together.

Another consideration that I overlooked initially was my availability by Skype or other chat programs. I am typically signed in to Google Talk so I can receive e-mail notifications, and although my status is always set to busy, it does not stop people from initiating chats. Since these chats popped up on the screen while I was sharing it, my students were able to read private chat messages. Fortunately, they were nothing personal or embarrassing, but this is a practical consideration that I initially overlooked. Additionally, because I was signed in to Skype, other people on Skype could contact me. I was aware of this, but only used Skype outside of class to talk to a friend halfway around the world who I knew would be asleep when we had our class meetings. However, because my Skype settings were public, other individuals could contact me. As it happened, the same day my friend sent me a chat message on Google Talk, a stranger sent me a chat message on Skype about five minutes later, much to the amusement of my students. After those incidents, I made sure that I was signed out of Google Talk and that my Skype status was set to "busy" (which does not allow other callers to interrupt you). However, it is important to change your Skype status to "busy" only after your virtual meeting has begun; the following week, my status was still set to "busy" because I hadn't changed it back to "available," and when my student tried to initiate our meeting, it would not allow her to do so.

Another practical consideration is the type of microphone to use, which will depend on how many people participate in your virtual meeting. A regular computer microphone is a directional microphone, and is only designed to pick up speech from one direction. Therefore, if you use this type of microphone for a meeting where two or more people are physically present and one person is virtually present, you will need to pass the microphone back and forth so that

the virtual attendee can hear everything. However, this becomes problematic because the microphone is being moved, and many times the speaker does not get close enough to the microphone for it to pick up his or her speech. A better alternative is to acquire a multi-directional microphone. I had one that I used for class observations, and it worked very well. I placed it halfway between the physically present student and me, and the virtually present student was able to hear with no problem (although I found that I did need to speak a little louder than my normal speaking voice).

Last, we did not use a webcam, because we were meeting in my office and there was no place where I could set up a camera that could see both of us. One of the issues that was a little awkward for me personally was where to look when I was speaking to the student who was virtually present. For this reason, I will probably try to equip a virtual meeting with a webcam if I do this type of course offering again, and meet in a room where the webcam can record all participants. It would also have facilitated our final meeting when all three of us met face-to-face. Since I had never physically met the student who attended virtually, and we met in a restaurant, it was somewhat awkward to approach strangers and ask for their names.

## Conclusions

We have attempted to present a short summary of a variety of free (or widely-available) technologies that can be adapted for use in the language classroom. Current research indicates that technology can be used effectively to enhance or even deliver instruction if appropriately used. As we have discussed, CALL may either be autonomous or non-autonomous, and synchronous or asynchronous. Each type of CALL will require a different time commitment in order to implement it in a language classroom; autonomous forms require more time prior to implementation but virtually no time after implementation, whereas non-autonomous forms require little time prior to implementation, but require an ongoing time commitment for implementation. Not all courses and activities will be appropriate for CALL, but the wide variety of programs and platforms currently available provide instructors with a toolbox of options for creating meaningful, relevant course content, as well as for enabling learners to interact with the language and culture in real time. Our own experiences using these technologies have been overwhelmingly positive, and we are excited to continue using these technologies in our classrooms, both as students and as teachers.

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## **Appendix A**

### **List of Web Sites Referenced in Text**

#### **Journals addressing CALL**

1. <https://calico.org/page.php?id=5> (free)
2. <http://ilt.msu.edu/> (free)
3. <http://www.eurocall-languages.org/recall/index.html> (requires paid subscription)
4. <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/09588221.asp> (requires paid subscription)

#### **Sites for autonomous synchronous CALL**

5. <http://www.quia.com>
6. <http://www.conjuguemos.com>
7. <http://www.studyspanish.com>
8. <http://www.colby.edu/~bknelson/SLC/>
9. <http://www.eduslide.net>

#### **Sites for non-autonomous synchronous CALL**

10. <http://www.acrobat.com>
11. <http://get.adobe.com/air/otherversions/>
12. <http://get.adobe.com/reader/?promoid=BUIGO>
13. <http://www.skype.com/download/skype/windows/downloading/>
14. <http://support.skype.com/>

#### **Sites for non-autonomous asynchronous CALL**

15. <http://www.facebook.com>
16. <http://www.blogger.com>
17. <http://www.wordpress.com>
18. <http://docs.google.com>
19. <http://www.yourwiki.net>
20. <http://www.wikia.com>
21. <http://www.intodit.com>
22. <http://pbworks.com/academic.wiki>
23. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>
24. <http://www.surveymonkey.com>

**Appendix B**  
Rubrics for Assessing Student Blogs

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Week \_\_\_\_\_

**Regular posting (minimum of 7 postings). 25 points possible per posting.**

	Unacceptable quality	Does not meet expectations	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectations
Content is appropriate for blog. Addresses assigned topic (when applicable).	0	3	4	5
Grammatical structures mostly correct.	0	3	4	5
Well-organized.	0	3	4	5
Few typographical errors, including accent marks.	0	3	4	5
Words looked up in a dictionary are used appropriately.	0	3	4	5

Total: \_\_\_\_\_/25

Comments:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Week \_\_\_\_\_

**Posting about reading in Spanish (minimum of 2 postings and maximum of 4). 50 points possible per posting.**

	Unacceptable quality	Does not meet expectations	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectations
Chosen news article is in Spanish and link is provided on blog site. Article is recent (no older than a week old).	0	3	4	5
Grammatical structures mostly correct.	0	3	4	5
Words are used correctly.	0	3	4	5
Well-organized and is a response to the reading (not a summary).	0	3	4	5
Few typographical errors, including accent marks if written in Spanish.**	0	3	4	5

Total: \_\_\_\_\_/25

Comments:

\*\* For first-year courses, students are allowed to respond to readings in English if they choose. However, the reading must be in Spanish.

**Appendix B (continued)**  
 Rubrics for Assessing Student Blogs

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Week \_\_\_\_\_

**Audio-visual posting (optional; maximum of 4 postings). 50 points possible per posting.**

	Unacceptable quality	Does not meet expectations	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectations
Speech is clearly comprehensible, with minimal pronunciation errors.	0	3	4	5
Content is appropriate and is sufficiently developed.	0	3	4	5
Grammatical structures mostly correct.	0	3	4	5
Makes good use of vocabulary covered in class (if applicable). Words looked up in a dictionary are used appropriately.	0	3	4	5
<i>If audio-only:</i> Recording can be understood without any supporting text or visuals. <i>If audio-visual:</i> Visual element appropriate for topic and relevance/importance is clear.	0	3	4	5

Total: \_\_\_\_\_/25

Comments:



## 2

# The Possibilities and Potential of Podcasting

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### Introduction

**W**hat is podcasting, why is it useful, and how can it be integrated into the world language classroom? These questions guide this article as we explore successful student-produced podcasting projects in both French and Spanish. We will demonstrate how podcasting activities, which may be used to connect writing, speaking, and listening skills, help students reach learning goals. Podcasting has the potential to increase the learners' exposure to oral tasks and improve their proficiency in modern, innovative, and appealing ways by providing an authentic audience and offering a genuine communicative purpose. Tips on how to design a podcast project are provided in the article, along with a detailed description of how three podcasting projects have been incorporated into language courses.

### What is a Podcast?

The word “podcast” is a portmanteau combining the terms “iPod,” an electronic music player, and “broadcast.” It refers to online audio or video files released regularly by their producers, to which listeners can subscribe and download automatically. The programs are stored on their computer, and may then be transferred to an MP3 device for on-the-go playback. The appeal of podcasts is that anyone equipped with a computer, an audio-recording software program,

and a microphone can produce one and distribute it on the Internet, thus easily reaching a large audience. Podcasts are typically delivered through Real Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds: a live bookmark informs the user when a new episode is available. From a listener's perspective, podcasts are convenient because free, dedicated client software applications such as iTunes (<http://www.apple.com/itunes>) or Winamp (<http://www.winamp.com/>) retrieve them as soon as a new episode is available. It requires minimal effort, like receiving a new magazine issue in one's mailbox.

### **Podcasting in Education**

It is rare today to walk on a college campus without seeing headphones draped around students' necks. Between class periods, people walk while listening to music and podcasts. Maximizing the popularity of this new trend by using podcasting in educational settings could be advantageous (O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007). Many teachers have already started to do so by using podcasts to disseminate course information (Huann & Thong, 2006; Meng, 2005), to create new course material (Sathe & Waltje, 2008), or to distribute missed information to an absent student (Tavales & Skevoulis, 2006). For example, iPods were distributed at Osaka Jogakuin College in Japan in spring 2004 and at Duke University in the United States to expose students to lectures on-the-go (McCarty, 2005). Furthermore, Stanford University, in partnership with Apple, publisher of the popular iTunes software, distributes faculty lectures, campus information, and other learning materials through podcasts ("Stanford, Apple team up to offer audio content through iTunes," 2005). In addition to on-campus uses, podcasts offer a unique way to reach alumni, community members, and off-site students. Research has found that podcasts reduce the isolation and anxiety often associated with distance education (Lee & Chan, 2007). Finally, podcasting in education allows a unique opportunity to build on an already popular student behavior (Godwin-Jones, 2005; Thorne & Payne, 2005), and podcasts in general are easy to produce either by instructors or by students (Warlick, 2005).

More specific to language learning, the number of podcasts available to language learners on the web is growing every day and can be located by searching online directories. They can be categorized into two groups: (1) those intended for native speakers offering authentic input (2) and those that target second language learners offering modified input (see Tables 1 and 2). The former cover as many topics as one could imagine: current events, politics, entertainment, food, language, self-help, etc. The latter discuss cultural topics such as cuisine, holidays, and myths, but also current trends such as Facebook or Harry Potter. One instance comes from the University of Wisconsin podcast series, which offers students opportunities to listen to a description in the target language and draw the scene that they hear, like a bedroom and its objects. This site also provides recorded conversations with authors and local Hispanic businesspersons, and is one of many that couples podcasting with language learning.

**Table 1.** Most downloaded audio and video podcasts for the week of 09/27/09, as categorized in iTunes. These are for native speakers.

	<b>Audio Podcasts</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Category</b>
1	This American Life	Chicago Public Radio	Personal Journals
2	Wait Wait... Don't Tell Me...	National Public Radio	Games & Hobbies
3	Celebrity Playlist Podcast	iTunes	Music
4	Stuff You Should Know	HowStuffWorks.com	Society & Culture
5	Fresh Air	National Public Radio	Society & Culture
	<b>Video Podcasts</b>		
1	The Ricky Gervais Podcast	Ricky Gervais	Comedy
2	Amanpour	CNN	News & Politics
3	iPhone Ringtones	RingtoneFeeder.com	Gadgets
4	Real Time with Bill Maher	HBO Podcasts	News & Politics
5	The Coolest Stuff on the Planet	HowStuffWorks.com	Places & Travel

**Table 2.** Most downloaded podcasts for language learners in iTunes for the week of 09/27/09. These are for non-native speakers.

	<b>Audio Podcasts</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Language</b>
1	English as a Second Language	Center for Educational Development	English
2	Learn German for Free	Stephan Wiesner	German
3	Learn French by Podcast	editor@learnfrenchbypodcast.com	French
4	Italian Podcast	World Languages Podcasting	Italian
5	French Podcast	World Languages Podcasting	French
6	Learn Spanish with La Casa Rojas	Luis Rojas	Spanish
7	Learn Chinese	CSLPod.com	Chinese
8	Easy French Poetry	LearnFrenchInBoston.com	French
9	The Arabic Podclass	Unknown	Arabic
10	Pukka German Podcast	Pukkagerman.com	German

Podcasting holds incredible potential for language learners. Students are able to produce and listen to podcasts in another language, thus creating “their own mobile immersion environments” (Thorne & Payne, 2005, p. 386). This extended class time is one of the benefits of podcasting, as students continue to receive input outside of the classroom (Janossy, 2007; O’Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007; Stanley, 2006). In addition, students are immersing themselves in authentic material that is of interest to them (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). These podcasts do not resemble the content of a repetitive lab manual recording. On the contrary, they are meant to be interactive, conversational, and informative. Furthermore, the self-paced nature of podcasting allows students to pause, rewind, and play recordings over when needed, and therefore slow down for parts they find particularly problematic and difficult to interpret.

### **Our Podcasting Projects**

As can be seen, the potential uses of podcasts are vast. They can be adapted to specific content, from the study of phonetics to activities geared toward interpersonal communication. This article describes three student-produced podcast projects carried out in a mid-sized liberal arts university in the Midwest between 2007 and 2009: two in French and one in Spanish. The first project was conducted in a French phonetics class. In the recordings, students used their native language to rephrase pronunciation lessons that had been given to them in French. These podcasts were sent to high-school students in beginning French classes. The second project presented in this article was carried out in a French composition and conversation class, cinema being its central theme. Every week, students released an audio critique in French of a francophone film that they watched. Advanced high school students read and listened to them, and eventually used that information to select a film to watch for their class. The last podcasting project discussed here was for an advanced conversation course in Spanish and engaged students in the creation of conversational podcasts. Classmates then listened to the recordings and evaluated them. Table 3 below provides an overview of these projects. Samples of rubrics, evaluation forms, worksheets, and podcasts can be accessed at <http://people.uwec.edu/millerjs/podcasting/>.

**Table 3:** Overview of our podcasting project

Course	Assignment	Grouping	Episodes per group	Assessment
French Pronunciation	Recycle pronunciation topics for K-12 classroom (scripted)	3 per group	1	Instructor
French Cinema	Critique francophone films (scripted)	Individual	12	Instructor
Spanish Conversation	Spontaneously converse about a topic of interest (unscripted)	Pairs	3	Peers & self

*Initial Project Planning*

There are many facets of a podcasting project that must be in place before the project begins. Most importantly, instructors have to consider the types of objectives for their course and how podcasting may help achieve these objectives. For example, podcasting in a conversation class may involve recording interviews. In a pronunciation class, it may involve students creating tongue twisters and activities with a technical vocabulary. If podcasting is done in a literature course, students may broadcast book reports or critiques, and tie their work to a final research project. With some imagination, podcasting can be adapted to any type of class. However, careful planning is required for a seamless and meaningful integration, as podcasting usually is a demanding project for all parties involved.

For teachers, the national foreign language standards (1999) are easily captured within the flexibility of podcasting projects. Podcasting offers a means for the development of interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational performance assessments. Students are able to plan a podcast for a presentational activity or create a podcast more spontaneously for an interpersonal assessment. Additionally, students can also interpret a podcast either created by native speakers or for language learners to improve interpretive communication. Culture, comparisons, and the community standards can be woven into a podcasting project as well. The use of this technology can help us meet our varied pedagogical goals for the world language classroom.

Once the goals have been established, the number of episodes or podcasts to be recorded set, and the themes selected, instructors can decide how to group their students. Here too, there is a myriad of possible configurations. For a large project, one may form groups of several students, each person having a predetermined role to fulfill. Otherwise, pairing students may suffice. It is nevertheless important to approach podcasting as collaborative work so that learners are not left alone to deal with technology and an assignment format with which they are unfamiliar. Having a peer for support is always helpful and reassuring. Groups or pairs can be formed simply at random or by matching or mismatching abilities. In addition, the groupings can remain the same throughout the semester or be alternated for every podcast episode.

Before introducing the podcasting project, students typically spend a class period in the computer lab. This orientation familiarizes them with the lab, the microphones, and the recording software, i.e., all the material that they will later use. Printed instructions are provided in the target language as additional support as students experiment with how to record, edit, play back, add special effects and/or music, and save their work. Students may be asked to create an experimental two-minute podcast or listen to models of podcasts created by the instructor. The goal is for students to feel comfortable and confident using the equipment before beginning their projects.

*How to Podcast*

Due to the growing popularity of podcasting (Rose & Rosin, 2006; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007), there are various free audio recording software programs available

online. The program most often used by podcasters is Audacity (Mazzoni, 2006). Audacity allows users to record, edit, and save podcasts in standard audio formats like WAV. In order to save files as MP3s, users need to install a free encoder found on the Audacity website. In addition to a user-friendly interface, Audacity provides the ability to select a language subsequently displayed in all of the menus and a control panel throughout the program. Students are consequently using the program in the target language and concurrently acquiring useful technological vocabulary (such as “save as,” “add effects,” “insert audio,” etc).

In addition to a computer and dedicated software, podcasting requires microphones. If students will be recording simultaneously, it is recommended to obtain noise-cancelling devices. A desktop microphone is sufficient, if the students can provide their own headphones to listen to their recordings. Headsets that combine headphones and microphones can also be used, and the sound quality is often superior with such equipment. However, they are more costly, and in order to accommodate several speakers connected to the computer at the same time, an audio box with multiple inputs is required.

Access to a server hosting the audio files and web pages is another prerequisite to successful podcasting projects. Nowadays, most schools are able to provide that space. If the podcasts are exported as MP3s, the files will be smaller than WAV documents and space should not become an issue. But if they include video, they can become too large and can cause storage issues. Schools would need to make special accommodations or use a podcast hosting service such as Odeo (<http://www.odeo.com>) or Hipcast (<http://www.hipcast.com>). Typically, schools can also help with web design by providing templates that can be adapted even by technophobes. It is nevertheless preferable to restrict the responsibility of maintaining the web page to the teacher, rather than leaving it to students to update the site. This is because students may spend significantly more time customizing their page and learning HTML code than immersing themselves in the target language, thus distracting them from the initial objectives of podcasting and generating work outside the scope of the project.

In what follows, we describe in detail the three aforementioned student-produced podcasts. We explain how the podcasting projects were tailored for each course, what motivated certain design and production choices, and how the projects benefited learners. Although podcasting has broad advantages, such as providing authentic communicative speaking practice, the manner in which this task is structured and the way that it is implemented can vary greatly. Therefore, different projects will have different pedagogical gains for students. The three podcasts below were chosen for inclusion in this article because they are quite different from one another, yet can be adapted to various language courses. They efficiently illustrate the diversity that this educational endeavor potentially brings to the students’ learning.

### **Podcasting for French Pronunciation**

The podcasting project detailed below was part of a French pronunciation and phonetics class for third-year students taught in Fall 2007 and 2008. This

course is required for those either majoring or minoring in the language. The objectives of this class were for learners to

- (a) phonetically transcribe written and audio material
- (b) explain differences in the production of sounds of French and English
- (c) interpret and read phonetic transcriptions with native-like accuracy
- (d) continually increase oral proficiency level in spontaneous speech
- (e) distinguish formal and informal speech
- (f) identify features of non-standard dialects of French.

The podcasting project addressed the first three goals in that students used the International Phonetics Alphabet in their scripts, rephrased what they had learned in class in a clear manner so as to be understood by high school students, and worked toward pronouncing French as native-like as they could.

### *Design*

For this project, rather than having groups create several episodes, each group was only in charge of one episode of the podcast series. The topics for the installments were selected following the sections in the syllabus: introduction to phonemes and syllables, liaison, consonants, nasal vowels, mid-vowels, semi-vowels, and schwas. Students selected their episode by considering the topics as well as the due dates, and listed them in their order of preference. The instructor could then match students according to their personal affinities. Letting participants choose their own topic was a way to increase motivation and investment in the project. Then, subtopics were chosen to determine how many members each group would need, as well as to assign roles to each contributor. For instance, there are three nasal vowels in French; therefore, the group responsible for that episode should contain three students, each describing a different nasal vowel.

At the end of the semester, the entire podcast series included several installments, each one made by a group of two or three students. In all, there were a total of six five-minute episodes that were released on the course website approximately every two weeks. As a consequence, there was not a shared due date: some groups had to finish their episode before midterm and others after.

Two weeks before recording, each individual was asked to submit a script. The instructor read and commented on them. A week before the due date, the group was required to meet with the instructor to go over the corrections and read the final script aloud to work on pronunciation details. With the instructor's approval, they were allowed to proceed and create the podcast episode.

### *Production*

The groups recorded their episodes in the computer lab of the Department of Foreign Languages outside of class time. Each member brought a finished script to this group endeavor, having worked thus far individually. Together, they drafted an introduction and a conclusion to their episode and designated a reader for those sections. They had been instructed to complete this stage as a group so that the speaker could rely on monitors to check pronunciation accuracy and provide help



if needed. Recording the podcast together also ensured smooth transitions and an even sound quality.

On average, producing the five-minute recording took between 30 and 60 minutes outside of class. More of the learners' time and effort was invested in the preparation of the script than in the production of the podcast itself. When the episode was ready, the group e-mailed it to the instructor, along with a PDF version of the script. The documents were then transferred online by the instructor for distribution to high schools. The learners who produced the recordings were aware of the target audience, which encouraged them to perform to the best of their ability. In addition, the podcasts were used as review tools at the end of the semester in the university pronunciation class, and were therefore heard by everyone enrolled in the course.

### *Benefits*

There are numerous benefits to integrating podcasting into a pronunciation course. One of them is the opportunity for learners to recycle the course material by reformulating the content in their own words and in an original format. Repeating pronunciation lessons is crucial for their assimilation, but is often lacking in language classes and textbooks (Arteaga, 2000). Before recording the podcasts, the students met with the instructor to receive feedback on their script. In these meetings, the instructor was often surprised to find that students had not always understood the phonetic concepts taught in class, despite applying them properly in exercises and quizzes. This suggests that many students had found ways to correctly complete assignments, possibly thanks to models, dictionaries, or memorization, without necessarily mastering the underlying phonological theories. Going over their script and discussing concepts individually made it possible to identify and rectify problem areas that were otherwise not visible. The instructor could be certain that the rules had been fully understood, and then more efficiently help learners with their pronunciation skills. Recycling the material provided both formative feedback to the instructor and immediate informal feedback to students regarding misunderstandings and clarifications of content.

While data were not collected in this course to investigate the impact of this project on students' pronunciation or understanding of phonetic concepts, research shows that learners do benefit from podcasting in pronunciation classes. In a recent study (Lord, 2008), students produced their own podcasts in a Spanish pronunciation class in order to improve their oral skills. Results suggest that podcasting had a positive effect on students' phonological accuracy as determined by external judges. Also, students' attitudes regarding pronunciation significantly improved according to pre- and post-test surveys, as they valued correct pronunciation more after engaging in podcasting. A similar study was done with students in intermediate German and French courses, and while results did not show a significant improvement in pronunciation, it did show that students found podcasting "worthwhile and enjoyable" (Ducate & Lomicka, 2009, p. 69). The evidence from research combined with the positive feedback received from students in the project described here support the hypothesis that podcasting can



have a positive impact on learners' abilities and motivation, and therefore offers great potential for phonetics courses.

Integrating podcasting into any course is one way to draw the learners' attention to the importance of accurate pronunciation, as well as the teachers'. Paradoxically, learners perceive pronunciation to be more important in world language courses than their instructors do. In a recent questionnaire, second language learners rated pronunciation as the fifth most important learning goal in their course, while instructors ranked it only tenth (Morin, 2007). Many teachers adhere to the 'osmosis myth,' assuming that learners will acquire pronunciation on their own, with no explicit instruction on phonology. This belief explains why little time is devoted to the teaching of pronunciation in world language classes, despite the fact that "the sound system of a language is often the most salient feature in the speech of a foreigner" (Lord, 2008, p. 364). In contrast, students who podcast, especially outside of a pronunciation class as described in the next section, are able to address issues with their pronunciation without necessarily devoting class time to it.

### **Podcasting for French Conversation and Composition**

This podcasting project was implemented in the fall of 2009 as part of a third-year French conversation and composition course, which used film as discussion material. This course, like the one described earlier, is mandatory for students enrolled in the French program as a major or a minor. The objectives of this class were for learners to

- (a) watch films with a critical eye
- (b) read and analyze authentic French texts on cinema
- (c) produce oral critiques and written analyses of French films
- (d) articulate clear opinions in spontaneous small-group conversations
- (e) assume responsibility for preparing and delivering in-class presentations
- (f) demonstrate fluency of language
- (g) show knowledge of trends, actors, and directors of French cinema.

The podcasting project addressed four out of these seven goals. It helped learners watch movies critically (objective a) because they provided an audio critique of each film that they watched. Secondly, learners engaged in both speaking and writing tasks (objective c) as the podcast was accompanied by a script containing additional information about the films. Thirdly, learners were given the opportunity to demonstrate linguistic fluency (objective f) by providing their personal opinion of the films in each podcast episode. Finally, this podcast allowed them to show and share their knowledge of French cinema (objective g) because they were required to present as much information on the films as they could.

### *Design*

Unlike the podcasting project described earlier for French pronunciation, every student in this class was responsible for an entire podcast series, containing

twelve different episodes produced throughout the semester (i.e., approximately one per week). This was an individual assignment. Although students could watch movies in groups, they were asked to provide a personal audio commentary after each viewing, as well as write a “fact sheet” with information on the movie (title, director, year, etc.) and a synopsis to be uploaded onto the class website. The preliminary steps to this project were similar to those described for the pronunciation course. However, since this was an individual task the recordings needed little editing, and therefore less time was spent training the students with the recording software.

Each student was asked to watch twelve francophone films from a list of locally-available titles provided at the beginning of the semester. Students were free to choose which feature to view depending on their preferences and the availability of the DVD at the given time. This free selection process allowed the podcasts to be more varied from one student to another, in spite of inevitable overlaps.

For this project, a close collaboration was established with a local high school French class. The K-12 teacher commented that finding listening activities suitable for her students’ level was a challenge, and therefore podcasts could help fill that gap. Her students visited the podcast website regularly, and the information they gathered informed their choice as to which film to watch in class each quarter.

### *Production*

Each student produced a podcast individually and outside of the classroom after each weekly film viewing. They uploaded the written and audio material directly to the class website and updated the list of the films that they had watched. The instructor also played a role in making the site more attractive by embedding a different video on the home page every week, featuring the trailer of a French-language movie currently showing in France.

The podcasting project described here was not overly ambitious and was purposely simplified because it was a first attempt at integrating technology into this class. Yet it achieves the course goals efficiently in that it creates opportunities to regularly practice both writing and speaking in equal amounts. Learners typically spent two hours a week watching a film, plus one hour preparing their script and creating their podcast episode. Their recordings lasted between one and two minutes, which may seem short, but the compact recordings allowed them to maintain the listeners’ attention and enabled the instructor to give detailed, individualized feedback on grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The rubric used by the teacher to evaluate the episodes rewarded accurate grammar, advanced vocabulary, and correct pronunciation. It also encouraged natural speech so as to avoid monotonous reading styles. Additional points were earned for the quality of the audio critique. Students who gave detailed reasons why they enjoyed a movie or not, making convincing arguments, were awarded higher grades.

### *Benefits*

Tying this podcast to a cinema class has several short-term advantages. First, it helps focus the learners' goals while watching a film each week. Understanding that they will have to summarize the movie and provide an audio critique keeps them on task; they cannot afford to be passive viewers as they otherwise might be. Second, weekly deadlines ensure regular practice of their listening, speaking, and writing skills, through film viewings, audio critiques, and information sheets.

This project may also help learners transition from writing to speaking, an important step in an intermediate course like the one described in this section. Creating a podcast potentially contributes to a better balance between writing and speaking proficiency. In addition to speaking, students enrolled in this course had the chance to listen to their classmates' recordings and check their comprehension on the scripts posted on the website. A recent study performed with adult learners listening to podcasts has shown that hearing a word while seeing it in print yielded more precise interpretation and better results on quizzes (Janossy, 2007). Therefore, when scripts are available online, students may opt to use them at first and can progressively transition to no print support towards the end of the semester when they have developed more confidence in their listening skills.

This transition is important; even though they may not be conscious of it, teachers and students often favor the written mode at the expense of oral and aural activities. Looking at a world language textbook, for example, reveals a strong focus on grammar and vocabulary, and little emphasis, if any at all, on pronunciation (Walz, 1986). This lack of opportunities to practice speaking in class and outside of the classroom, leads to uneasiness towards the oral mode, which often turns into linguistic insecurity. This "inhibitory effect" (Arteaga, 2000, p. 342) leads to decreased self-confidence when speaking, which is dispiriting and not conducive to encouraging oral practice. Through this project, students engage in both tasks equally in and out of class, and progressively become more comfortable speaking to an audience.

Benefits to student podcasting exist for instructors as well. The ease of assessment plays an important role in the type of activities chosen by teachers. Too often, assignments and exams are written because paper is a convenient mode with which to give feedback; it requires little material, and can be shared and read many times. Unfortunately, this natural tendency reduces the importance of speaking practice. Podcasting, however, allows an instructor to evaluate a student's work from both the audio components and the scripts that are provided, should a scripted format be adopted. As a consequence, grammar and vocabulary can be evaluated simply, and attention can be focused on intelligibility. In addition, teachers can download episodes and play them back at their own convenience, pausing and rewinding as needed, as opposed to strenuous, time-consuming individual interviews that must be evaluated immediately.

### Podcasting for Spanish Conversation

This next podcasting project was integrated into an advanced Spanish conversation class in the spring of 2007 and the fall of 2007. This is a speaking-intensive course required for both majors and minors Spanish program. The objectives were

- (a) to improve the students' ability to articulate their ideas succinctly
- (b) to develop their conversational skills in both scripted and unscripted contexts
- (c) to guide them into approaching literature with a more critical eye
- (d) to increase their confidence in oral situations.

The podcasting project addressed three of the four course learning goals. Podcasting provided opportunities to speak spontaneously (objective b) in unscripted conversations. Podcasting also encouraged students to speak in formal and informal contexts (objective d) and to address various speech functions such as expressing opinions, complimenting, explaining, and asking questions (objective a).

### Design

Prior to producing the first recording of their podcast, students were provided with a model. They listened to a podcast from *Notes in Spanish*, a broadcast from Spain in which a married couple, one native-speaker and one non-native speaker, discusses topics of current interest. The website offers podcasts for beginning to advanced language learners as well as worksheets that accompany each podcast (Curtis & Diez, 2008). The students' task was to not only interpret the content of the podcasts, but also to note the structure of the podcast. An accompanying worksheet, created for this purpose, focused their attention as they listened.

Pairs of students recorded three podcasts over the span of the semester. Each group could select one general theme to use throughout the semester to which each of the three episodes would relate (e.g., movies, art, dating, campus life, ballet, etc.). Every group was encouraged to find a unique topic so as to avoid repetition. After each podcast recording, students were asked to listen to two of their peers' episodes and provide comments. Finally, they were required to complete self-evaluations of their work.

The first episode served as an introduction to the chosen general theme. Each student in the pair contributed four open-ended questions relevant to the issues and challenges inherent to their broad topic. This first installment aimed to introduce the podcasters to their listeners as well as the subject matter. The second podcast added depth by offering a top-ten list on the selected topic. For instance, if cinema was the theme, students inventoried the "Top Ten Most Annoying Things about Going to the Movie Theater." The third episode was modeled on a debate. For example, students could argue whether or not movie stars are entitled to high salaries.

### *Production*

Unlike the examples given for French, the podcasts in this Spanish course were produced in class. Each episode generally took two class periods to complete. The first class concentrated on *Notes in Spanish* to develop the learners' understanding of podcasts. After discussing what they had heard and how *Notes in Spanish* had made the episodes appealing to their audience, the students planned their own podcasts and brainstormed strategies to make their podcast appealing to others. Each episode was required to be 10-15 minutes long, to include a linguistic focus (such as preterit/imperfect or subjunctive), and to incorporate a minimum number of expressions/vocabulary from class. Students were given a guide with useful phrases like "the best," "the worst," "we will count backwards," or "now we move on to number five," that they could draw on as they worked on their top-ten list.

The second day, the teams recapitulated their plan and proceeded with the recording. Some groups chose to edit the podcast as they went, while others opted to reserve that stage for later. The episodes were then saved as MP3s and uploaded to the server, ready to be distributed online.

### *Assessment*

This project differs from the other two in that the assessment was not done by the instructor, but by the students. When the newest episodes were released, learners completed a self-evaluation. That step allowed them to reflect and evaluate their preparedness, teamwork, the clarity of their speech, and the general quality of their podcast. Additionally, they were asked to identify two grammatical or lexical errors in their episode, one committed by themselves and one by their partner. After noting the mistakes and correcting them, they explained why they were incorrect. Finally, they stated what they enjoyed the most in their podcast as well as what they would improve in the next installment.

Each individual was also expected to listen to another group's work and fill out a peer-evaluation form. They assessed the overall appeal of the episode that they heard, offered suggestions for improvement, praised its positive qualities, and asked pertinent questions that their classmates would answer in the next recording. Students listened to and evaluated at least three different groups by the end of the semester.

### *Benefits*

One of the many benefits of the project was that podcasting offered students the opportunity to reflect upon, monitor, and evaluate their own language production. The use of self-assessment encourages learner awareness and noticing of errors. In a typical conversation course, students participate in numerous activities, but their utterances are only temporary. Participants in this course had a permanent token reminding them of their acquired knowledge. The ability to review and reflect upon one's spoken language ability is a powerful strategy for language learning. Researchers have hypothesized that the process of noticing likely leads learners to make changes to their output (Chapelle, 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 1995).

Focus on form in genuine communicative contexts helps speakers identify their personal weaknesses as they arise in natural conversations, thus the use of self-assessment was appropriate in this project.

Self- and peer-assessment also helped reduce anxiety in this project. Stress is generally visible during oral presentations, exams, or interviews, as speakers become tense and natural behavior is affected. Students engaged in this Spanish podcasting activity incorporated music and laughter, demonstrating lower affective inhibitions in the target language than what is usually observed in other oral assignments. This could be linked to the finding that listening to peer-produced podcasts promotes a sense of community and engagement (Lee & Chan, 2007; Lord, 2008). The sense of community may reduce affective issues and increase student satisfaction. In this class, both of these characteristics were observed, though not formally measured.

The conversational side of this podcasting activity is another interesting and distinguishing aspect of the Spanish project. Learners engaged in immediate two-way spontaneous communication, while in the French courses it was delayed since the recordings were scripted. This spontaneous interaction enabled learners to practice negotiation of meaning, an essential skill in second language acquisition (Chapelle, 1998; Long, 1996; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). Adapting to an interlocutor's response and, therefore, to unexpected situations adds a challenge to the act of speaking, a difficulty that is appropriate and desirable in classes that wish to prepare students for authentic, functional interactions in the target culture.

## **Discussion**

This use of podcasting aims to develop linguistic proficiency and communicative competence in second language learning. Creating regular recordings for an audience develops oral skills by shifting the language class focus. The learners' purpose moves from manipulating forms of the target language in the classroom to achieving effective communication through the target language in the online universe. Chapelle (1998) underlines the importance of an authentic audience so that learners "construct meanings for communication rather than solely for practice" (p. 23). This helps learners concentrate on intelligibility, a skill necessary to function abroad that is difficult to hone in a four-walled environment. Podcasting can tear down these walls by providing an audience for a class. It is logical to think that learners put more effort into their work when they know it will be available to the public. For instance, collaborating with secondary schools can draw in external listeners and prove helpful to both parties. One could also envision publicizing the podcast to senior centers eager to bring world language instruction to their residents. In sum, podcasting is a way to enrich not only the learners' experience, but also to reach out to the larger community.

In addition, podcasting encourages self-monitoring. Indeed, knowing that errors can lead to misunderstandings and thus have an immediate tangible impact on communication perhaps makes learners feel more accountable for the quality of their speech than grades alone might. As learners create podcasts, they need to rely on their own perception and/or their partners' feedback more than their

instructor's to gauge the overall value of their work and identify mistakes to be corrected before their episode is released to the world. Self-monitoring is crucial in second language acquisition as in many other disciplines. One cannot correct errors, and therefore improve, if one does not notice them.

When learners become able to monitor their own communicative abilities, they can witness their language develop and derive satisfaction from visible improvement. From observations in the courses described in this article, podcasting seems to increase motivation and learner autonomy. Students worked independently to craft their own unique episodes, sometimes complete with customization such as special effects and music added during editing. In addition, comparing early recordings with the final ones can add a sense of accomplishment and a feeling of control over learning.

Another important feature of podcasting is that it accommodates different learning styles (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). Students may transform input into output at their own pace when producing an episode. Visual learners can work from scripts or find support in web pages; auditory learners can listen to their peers' podcasts as well as their own in order to gather information that will help them progress; kinesthetic learners can manipulate speech in the editing software program, customize the recordings to their liking, and see a final product emerge from their efforts.

## **Conclusion**

This article described three different projects that employed student-produced podcasts to improve oral proficiency. Although they each had specific goals and targeted gains, they shared the objective of presenting students with opportunities to demonstrate fluency in an authentic communicative context, and have fun doing so. The flexibility of podcasting allows this new resource to be easily integrated into various course objectives, from spontaneous to planned speech, for a K-12 audience or for oneself; podcasting is a multi-faceted tool.

The inherent potential of podcasting is now starting to be discovered as more conferences, journals, and teachers begin to explore this medium. With as many designs as one's imagination allows, podcasting can be an infinite source of creative pedagogy. On the other hand, some question the utilization of technology in class, arguing that it sometimes is nothing more than a crowd-pleasing gimmick with little learning substance (Chinnery, 2006; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). Some call it "disruptive technology" (Godwin-Jones, 2005) as computer-based teaching modes "allow for new and different ways of doing familiar tasks, and in the process, may threaten traditional industries" (p. 9). It is true that if teachers use a certain technology because students might find it entertaining and tailor their objectives to that activity, learners will not benefit from it. Instructors should approach podcasting, and the inclusion of any new technology, in the appropriate manner: set the learning goals first, and then decide which pedagogical tool will be most helpful in reaching them. A traditional pen-and-paper task is sometimes best.



This article does not advocate for the automatic adoption of podcasting in world language classes. Instead, we hope to illustrate the potential and meaningful uses of this technology to provide students with new learning opportunities. In the end, keeping track of what our students enjoy doing is important so that we may best adapt to this ever-changing population in appropriate ways. Before we know it, teachers themselves may be draped with headphones around their necks listening to iPods, adapting a student habit into a powerful teaching practice.

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# 3

## **Foreign Language Teacher Professional Development: Connecting with the Community Through Technology**

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**F**or over a decade, second language faculty members at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock have offered foreign language professional development opportunities and workshops in a variety of formats to enable teachers in the state's public and private K-12 classrooms to gain knowledge about trends in second language teaching and to improve their classroom teaching and language competency. Throughout these activities, the faculty leaders collected data that support the need for teachers to receive ongoing opportunities for skill improvement and pedagogical assistance.

When the state of Arkansas mandated 60 hours per year of professional development for its classroom teachers, a team of the university's second language faculty looked for funding to assist teachers with this annual obligation. Through dollars made available from federal grants by the United States Department of Education and its No Child Left Behind (NCLB) program and awarded first to the Arkansas Department of Higher Education and then reawarded to state institutions of higher education, the second language faculty team began to offer workshops for the full 60 hours of professional development to foreign language teachers in the state.

The grant guidelines require that the 60 hours of professional development be spread over a significant period of time in order to guarantee that the content

of the workshops has an impact on the teachers and in turn on the students they teach. The workshops fill easily due to the teachers' need to fulfill the 60-hour professional development requirement and also due to the fact that the second language program at the university had already established a reputation for quality professional offerings. Additionally, foreign language teachers are continually searching for professional development opportunities that relate to the language-specific classes they teach rather than generic types of workshops often offered by districts, educational cooperatives, state departments of education, or education associations.

### **Professional Development**

Trayer (2006) reports that there are many professional development opportunities available to second language teachers often offered by state, regional, and national foreign language organizations, yet many teachers do not have the funds necessary to pay the dues and registration fees required to attend these professional development opportunities. The current economic crisis has pushed these opportunities even farther from teachers who may need the information the most. Likewise, specific foreign language professional development opportunities often take the form of a one-session workshop with an emphasis on transmission of information rather than on the development of strategies, materials, and assessments needed for working with foreign language students (Diaz-Maggioli, 2003).

Medley and Terry (2006) also list several questions that professional development providers must consider as they plan and offer workshops for in-service teachers:

- What is the necessary support that teachers need to take advantage of professional development opportunities, such as release time, funding, providing alternate means of instruction (e.g., substitute teachers, etc.), college/university/CEU credit, and reward?
- When is the optimal time for offering professional development opportunities: during the school day? after school? on weekends? during the summer?
- What is the ideal content for professional development opportunities to support the maintenance and improvement of language, pedagogical skills, and cultural skills?
- Who should determine professional development needs: the teachers? department chairs? supervisors? school administrators? and/or a combination of these?
- How and where will the necessary immersion experiences take place: in immersion programs? abroad? in intensive language programs? through community service?
- How should professional conferences best reflect and support professional development needs?
- How can we ensure that the essential needs for the integration of technology into foreign language teaching are being met?

Medley and Terry also call for models of in-service programs to be disseminated just as those that have been disseminated for the content of in-service education.

Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2001) add that there are four instructional environments that determine the quality of professional development programs:

- Learner-centered environments that build on the strengths, interests, and needs of the learners;
- Knowledge-centered environments, in which teachers' pedagogical content is specific to their subject area;
- Assessment-centered environments where participants have opportunities to test their understanding by trying out strategies and receiving feedback; and
- Community-centered environments, which involve norms that encourage collaboration and learning.

Arkansas regulations regarding professional development for teachers are not unlike those of other states. Recently the demands for additional hours of professional development have mirrored the requirements of the No Child Left Behind legislation for "highly qualified teachers" in their field of licensure, mandating that teachers must have a bachelor's degree, have obtained full state licensure, and must have demonstrated content area competence in the field where they teach (*Highly Qualified Teachers*, 2006). In July 2005, when the Arkansas legislature revised teacher professional development requirements, they also specified that six hours of technology training be included. The workshop discussed here provided for both requirements by offering training in the use of technology to enhance classroom instruction and by embracing many of the questions and challenges posed by Medley and Terry (2006), as well as those of Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2001).

## Background

Second language faculty leaders at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) began to develop formalized relationships with local school district administrators and individual foreign language teachers in the early 1990s, in part to fulfill the university's mission to serve its constituencies and also to provide opportunities for classroom teachers to gain knowledge about trends in language teaching and to improve their individual language competency.

The connections that developed with districts varied widely. They included a memo of understanding with one district that provided funding for teachers to complete the course work required for licensure endorsement in teaching English to students of other language backgrounds, short term summer graduate workshops on such topics as using authentic materials in the classroom and on developing portfolio assessments, and university-funded, day-long workshops presented by such professional leaders as Steven Krashen, June Phillips, Robert Terry, and Robert diDonato. While evaluation of all of these projects and activities was uniformly positive, teachers regularly expressed frustration that they were

also required to attend in-service activities sponsored by their districts that bore no relation to their teaching or to topics relevant to their classroom environment.

As a result, a team of second language faculty convened a task force composed of representative teacher participants from the previous projects, the Associate Dean of the College of Education from UALR, and professional development coordinators for two of the larger local school districts to discuss possibilities for developing a series of professional development activities relevant to second language instruction that teachers could use to satisfy district and state requirements for professional development. Working with these stakeholders as the advisory committee, the university project team applied for and received funding from the state's Department of Higher Education to support in-service workshops through the Teacher Quality Enhancement Initiatives funding of Title II-A.

The first project, entitled "Developing Second Language Standards," was offered in 2005-2006 as a series of seven day-long sessions designed to assist teachers in acquiring knowledge and in the application of classroom curriculum standards for students in both foreign languages and English as a Second Language. The specific focus of this first series of workshops was the Communication and the Culture standards from *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (1999). The anticipated outcome of the project was that participants would modify their course instruction to include specific activities for these two standards guided by the grade-appropriate performance indicators. The workshops were offered once a month between August and April and, according to the requirements of the project, participants were expected to attend all sessions.

Although the school district administrators responsible for professional development from the planning task force had participated in selecting dates for the workshops and had signed as project team members enabling their teachers to participate and receive subsidies required for substitute teachers as expected under the terms of the grant, several teachers who applied were unable to receive permission from building administrators/principals to attend the workshops because the principals controlled all of the professional development hours for their teachers. Some schools purported to have no funds to provide substitutes, requiring teachers to pay for their own substitutes and to take a leave in order to attend. In spite of all of the logistical challenges, this series of workshops was beneficial in terms of long term assimilation of the workshop content, and all participants made some progress in understanding and embedding the outcomes envisioned by the standards into their curriculum.

Inasmuch as the format of these workshops was favorably received, the project managers again met with school district professional development coordinators before submitting a request for funding in a second year to ascertain a better process for informing building administrators and principals that these workshops were sanctioned by the district's professional development specialists. This strategy resulted in fewer teachers having difficulties receiving approval to participate. Requirements of the grant submission process include collaboration with stakeholders, development of a recruitment plan to assure that underserved groups of students are represented by teacher participants, and selection of a

partner district that meets federal requirements of a high-need Local Education Agency (LEA). The requirement to include a partner from among the state's high-need LEAs caused several additional challenges, the most significant of which was simply locating statistics on districts and subsequently ascertaining that they met the descriptors for the high-need district definitions. Once a qualifying district was located, the project manager contacted an administrator in that district. It was also important that teachers from the high-need LEA be interested in participating. In selecting one high-need district, the project manager discovered that the local district administrator in the high-need LEA was eager to work in partnership with the university to provide development opportunities for foreign language teachers in his school. However, the teachers were completely unmotivated and showed little interest in participating.

Project team leaders noted, then, that district administrative support, while significant, was not the only key to recruiting and maintaining interest among teacher participants. The most significant requisite to maintaining interest among teacher participants, often by word of mouth, was to assure that they were acquiring not only content knowledge, but also knowledge, techniques, and activities that participants believed would be useful and practical in their classes. Although there had been a plan to advertise and recruit teachers for the program, after the first project year more teachers applied than funding could support, so the recruitment plan was not needed. In the end-of-project evaluation several teachers reported that these workshops were the most valuable professional development activities they had experienced throughout their career. Moreover, the internal and external evaluators of the grant uniformly confirmed the value of these sessions for foreign language teachers.

The project for 2006-2007, entitled "Continuing the Development of Second Language Standards," focused on the remaining standards, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities. Again, the emphasis was on enabling teachers to understand and apply each standard in classroom instruction. (For more information on these professional development workshops, see McAlpine, Cheatham, Dhonau, and Lytle (2007) in the *ADFL Bulletin*.)

Because of the previous year's projects, participants were familiar with the modes of the Communication standard (interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational language). Therefore, the project in 2007-2008, "Integrating Second Language Standards and Performance Assessment," built upon this knowledge base and offered participants instruction in the concept of Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA). The anticipated outcome of this series was that each teacher would create several IPAs usable in their courses with the hope that the IPA model would become the standard assessment tool used in each classroom.

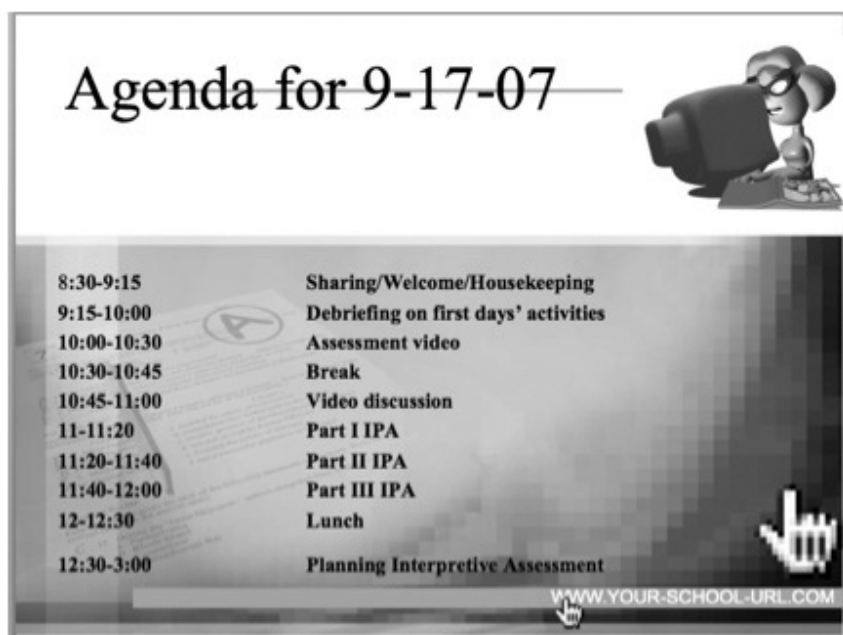
Since the initial year when some building administrators denied teachers' applications to participate in the workshops, the number of teachers anxious to participate has increased substantially. A significant majority of participants continues from year to year, and word of mouth among teachers has resulted in some new teachers participating each year as space permits.

Assuming that, by the end of year three, participants had acquired functional competence in developing and assessing activities in a standards-based classroom, the project administrators decided to move the focus in year four to the impact of second language teaching beyond the classroom in order to empower teachers to use the presentational communication of their students to make connections in the community. The project leaders planned to use technology to accomplish this goal.

In each year a similar format for the workshops was followed. The morning focused on instruction, with project team members providing examples of the key concepts of the day and, where appropriate and relevant, selected videos from the Annenberg Media Learner.org website series *Teaching Foreign Languages K-12 Workshop* were shown to encourage discussion and reinforce the day's key concepts. Activities were designed that required participants to create activities applicable to their classrooms that reflected the new content.

Following a working lunch, the participants used the unit's Languages Resource Center (LRC) to develop activities for the classes they were teaching and to store and compile their activities electronically. See Figure 1 for a typical day's workshop agenda.

**Figure 1.** Typical Day's Agenda



## Agenda for 9-17-07

8:30-9:15	Sharing/Welcome/Housekeeping
9:15-10:00	Debriefing on first days' activities
10:00-10:30	Assessment video
10:30-10:45	Break
10:45-11:00	Video discussion
11-11:20	Part I IPA
11:20-11:40	Part II IPA
11:40-12:00	Part III IPA
12-12:30	Lunch
12:30-3:00	Planning Interpretive Assessment

www.YOUR-SCHOOL-URL.COM



### Technology-Rich Advocacy Products

The goal of the fourth year of professional development workshops was to take content learned in the three preceding series of workshops, combine that knowledge with the use of technology, and to share this information with a variety of audiences for recruitment and program promotion. However, because the learning curve for the technology component was so great, the faculty team realized that the goal of having the participants utilize technology to demonstrate their students' ability to create presentational language samples and then take those samples into a variety of communities was too ambitious. The project therefore morphed into one with a focus on enabling the participants to acquire the capability to use current technology and to create advocacy products for their programs.

At the beginning of the workshop series, the participants were instructed to select four separate target populations and prepare four projects (i.e., a brochure, a PowerPoint presentation, a podcast, and an iMovie.) Among the audiences chosen by the participants were parents, students currently not enrolled in foreign language courses, guidance counselors, administrators, school boards, and community leaders.

In order to provide the participants with the most functional and user-friendly software and to encourage their use of emerging technology, the team leaders chose to use proprietary products in the department's Macintosh computer lab. From the *Microsoft Office 2008* suite, the team chose Word and PowerPoint and from the *iLife '08* suite, Garageband and iMovie were selected. Each participant received reference manuals for iLife '08 (Cohen, Bollow, & Harrington, 2008) and Microsoft Office 2008 (Schwartz, 2008). Additionally, participants received a 4GB flash drive to save their products throughout the workshop.

#### Project I: Brochures

Workshop leaders decided to begin with the production of a brochure using the Word Project Gallery of Microsoft® Office 2008. The benefit of using Microsoft Office Project Gallery is that it provides a user with predesigned templates for print media such as flyers, invitations, and in the case of this project, brochures. Because of the templates, participants were able to focus on researching the content of their brochure rather than on having to create a pleasing graphic design.

The project leaders divided the participants into teams. In some instances, the teams were composed of teachers from the same school, in other cases high school teachers were paired with teachers from their feeder middle schools. In one instance there was a district-wide collaborative team. Among the eleven brochures, six support the study of foreign languages, four presented the history of foreign language programs in their schools, and one merged the two concepts (see Figure 2 and 3).

The templates allowed the participants to add photographs from their own schools, include relevant school information, and highlight important program information graphically. The brochures were saved as an Adobe PDF file so that

they could be professionally copied. Moreover, as a PDF file they can easily be added to a school's website to reach an even larger audience. Each group received 600 brochures to distribute. An example of a final copy is presented in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

**Figure 2.** Promotional/Advocacy Brochure Exterior



Figure 3. Promotional/Advocacy Brochure Interior



While a brochure is not normally considered to be a high tech product, utilizing the available templates allowed teachers to produce a very professional-looking product. In reality, brochures may have been the most practical of the four products created by the teachers since they are of professional quality and are easily disseminated when computers, LCD projectors, or Internet access are not available.

## Project 2: PowerPoints

Participants chose different audiences for whom to prepare an advocacy PowerPoint presentation. In many of the schools, foreign language teachers often do not have the opportunity to share information on foreign language study within


the building or at PTA meetings. While each group chose a different audience, the end result was quite similar: to encourage each population to see that foreign language instruction is important in a person's education and enhances the critical thinking skills of all learners.

As participants organized and prepared content for a PowerPoint presentation, a similar process for researching the content of the brochures was followed. Workshop leaders encouraged the use of photos from participants' schools and graphics found on the Internet to enhance the visual appeal of the presentations; and in several cases, some participants with more advanced computer skills chose to film digital footage of foreign language learning in their buildings and add it directly into their PowerPoint presentations. Workshop leaders allowed each group to enhance their presentations to the best of the groups' collective technical expertise, thereby not threatening those who needed to create basic presentations and not inhibiting the creativity of those who wanted to create a more sophisticated product. Again, all participants saved their presentations as a PPT file on their flash drives and were also encouraged to save their presentations as a PDF file so that this digital material could be added to the schools' websites or shared with relevant parties at a later time. Figure 4 is a sample slide from one advocacy PowerPoint.

**Figure 4.** Sample Slide from Advocacy PowerPoint

## **+ Why Study a Second Language?**

- Only 5.6% of the world speaks English as a first language.
- Only 9% of U.S. population speaks English as well as another language fluently.
- 53% of Europeans speak their language as well as another language fluently.
- Only 44% of high school students study a foreign language

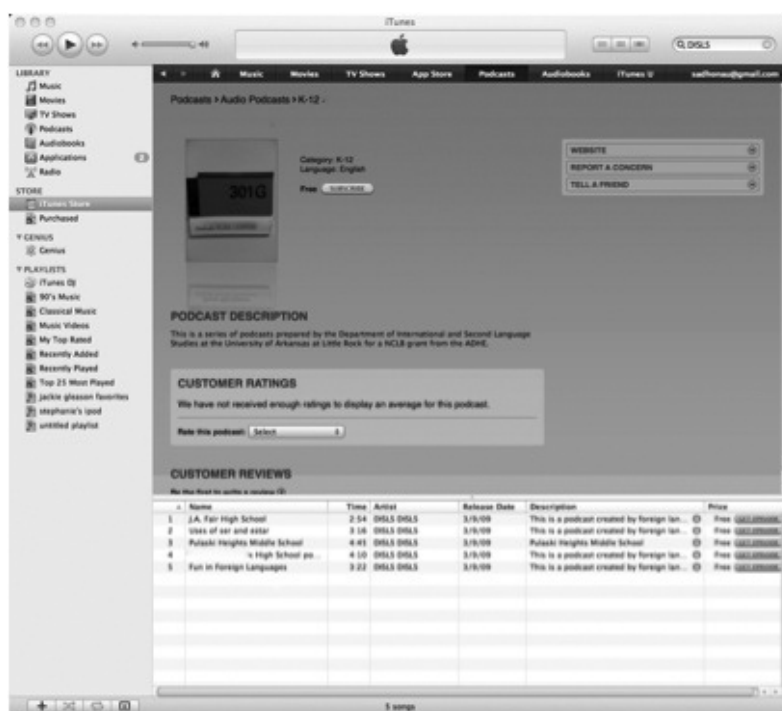


### Project 3: Podcasts

Most of the participants had no prior experience creating podcasts. For this activity, participants had to select their target audience, which was in most cases their own students because participants realized that this was the technology that many of their students were using regularly. Next, the participants wrote their podcast scripts, practiced them, recorded them, and selected a representative image as the icon for the podcast. The reference manuals were particularly valuable in creating the podcasts as the step-by-step process is clearly delineated. It took a significant amount of time to write, record, and edit the podcast as it was not to exceed three minutes in length.

Once the initial recording was completed, and as participants reviewed their work, in many instances they chose to rewrite and/or rerecord the podcast because it did not flow as smoothly as they had anticipated. Once completed satisfactorily, the podcast was uploaded to a workshop leaders' iTunes account (see Figure 5). In this manner it is accessible to anyone who wished to download it.

**Figure 5.** Participant Podcasts in iTunes



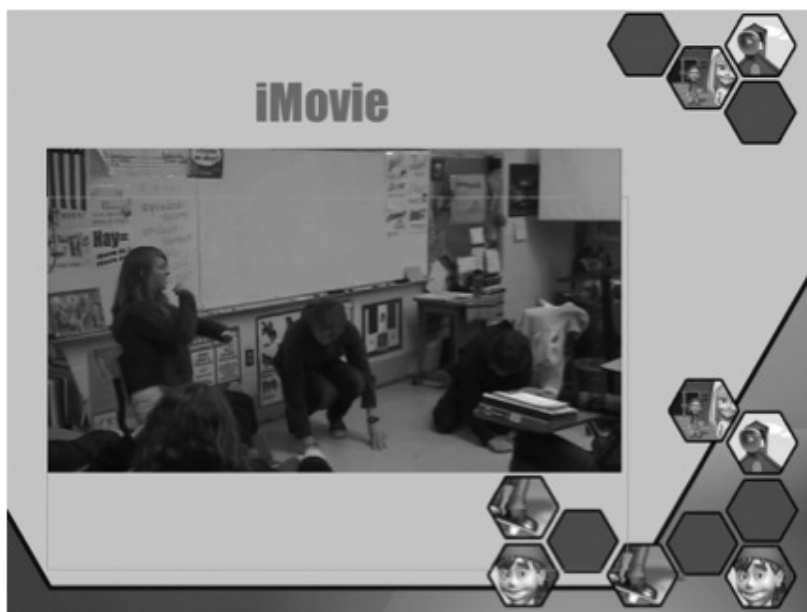
### Product 4: Digital Movie

The technological knowledge necessary to produce the digital movie was significantly more sophisticated and the technologically more challenging than what was required to produce the other three products. The idea of creating a

sophisticated digital movie that embedded sound files, video, and music originally sounded daunting to participants in that they lacked the skills necessary to complete such a task; however, using a step-by-step process and models created by the leadership team, participants learned that like any other technology, once they proceeded step by step to capture each element, they were able to merge the components into a professional-looking product that far exceeded their initial expectations.

Project leaders provided each group with a digital and a video camera to capture a variety of images (live-action or still shots) to serve as footage for the final movie. For sound and/or music, the participants were given a wide range of choices in that they could use the built-in sounds/music within GarageBand, find open-source media online, or bring media they had created themselves. Minimal editing was required, some shots had to be cut, and some transitions were added so that participants were satisfied that the final project communicated the story they envisioned within a reasonable time frame. At the end of the editing process, participants saved the projects as a Quicktime movie. Participants could share their video via their YouTube accounts through iMovie as well. A sample of an embedded iMovie is shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6.** Embedded iMovie





## Conclusion

The project team has planned and implemented 240 hours of professional development workshops over the four years of the projects in which more than 60 teachers have participated. Approximately half of the group has participated in more than 200 hours of workshops during this period. Since the primary goal of professional development is to improve the quality of teaching in order to enhance the capacity of students to know and use the target language, it is significant to note that more than 15,400 students have benefitted from the efforts of their teachers to embrace the new content and classroom strategies learned in the workshops.

From the perspectives of both an internal evaluator and year four workshop participants, positive outcomes of the sessions were reported. Related specifically to this fourth year project, the internal evaluator, whose field is neither foreign languages nor foreign language education, commented

They [participants] also mentioned that the technology skills and authentic activities that they were learning and using in their classroom from the workshops were having very positive effects on their student learning, behavior, and enthusiasm toward learning.

With regard to the products themselves, he additionally observed

To develop these products, the participants obviously had to learn a great deal of new technology, knowledge, and skills. To me, though, the most important aspect of this learning is that it involved learning the technologies in which their students were immersed in their own peer culture. I can certainly see the wisdom in teachers learning to do this in terms of engaging their students with meaningful, authentic activities that would be so much more motivating and engaging than the typical rote memory types of activities that they are generally provided.

When asked what was the most useful/valuable idea, strategy, or technique the teachers learned in this year's professional development workshop series, participants responded

- I am proud of our brochure and I feel that given the experience of creating these projects, I could apply this to my classroom as well.
- I loved learning with the iMovie because that's the medium my kids are most into and most willing to create. They'll make better products because they'll own this work and take more pride in it.
- I loved both the movie and the podcast. They were fun (stressful) and produced usable products.
- Creating the iMovie. Fantastic—now if my principal will just get me a Macbook.
- Variety of assessment techniques when using technology.

When asked if participants would include any of the technology learned in the following academic year, comments included

- Periodically, I will create and use podcasts for students to hear lessons again or learn new information.
- Using more PowerPoints with pictures of the students themselves. Have students make their own PowerPoint.
- I plan on incorporating these applications by having my students create their own brochure, PowerPoint, etc.
- PowerPoints are great for instruction and beginning practice. iMovie projects would be great for students in the presentational mode as well as podcasts for speaking practice.
- I intend to begin each quarter with a presentation. I also hope to add links to my website to the podcasts that I'll create.

Finally, when participants were asked to discuss how knowledge of second language standards and current technology matter for them as a classroom teacher and for their students, responses highlighted how their knowledge of current technology would help them connect with the young people they were trying to motivate.

- This will enable me to create more relevant (culturally and real-world) lessons and bring in more realia (FL music videos) to entice students and make lessons more engaging.
- It allows me to think of more innovative ways for my students to demonstrate their language skills while satisfying standards.
- My students use technology every day. Developing the standards through the use of technology seems natural to me—maybe required.
- A 21<sup>st</sup> century, highly qualified teacher (me) provides students with more educational opportunities to prepare students to be competitive world citizens, as well as better equipped team players in a world society and market.
- It generates additional interest for students, keeps us up to date and gives us additional methods to utilize when trying to make connections with the global community.

As others have noted, the need for long-term, meaningful professional development is clear. Through this project team leaders have demonstrated that it is possible for discipline-focused professional development to be worthwhile, and that technology is a valuable vehicle to ensure that this happens.

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# 4

## Preparing Future Professional Foreign Language Teachers

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### Introduction

Preservice foreign language (FL) teachers exert much time and effort completing courses that prepare them to be classroom teachers. Because few courses exist that prepare future FL teachers to become true professionals in their field, teacher candidates must receive such training outside of their required coursework. This article will address three key ways current FL educators in the field can assist in preparing future FL teachers to become professionals from the beginning of their careers: (a) active mentoring early on in the FL major and throughout the first three years of teaching, (b) the communication of good teaching practices, and (c) the encouragement of involvement in professional development opportunities and professional organizations.

FL teacher candidates are required to complete numerous courses in education and in their respective language as part of their prescribed coursework. The hope is that by successfully completing this coursework, these teachers will be prepared to begin teaching their FL effectively as soon as they complete their program and receive their college diploma. The realization is that although teachers may be prepared according to university and state requirements, there is still much about FL teaching that most FL teachers have not experienced. Many universities require students to complete a unit in a teaching methods course on professional development, and, as part of the National Council on the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) requirements, some teacher candidates are required to

attend a certain number of conferences hosted by professional organizations. The research literature indicates that the professional development of teachers takes place after the teacher has started his or her first teaching position and should continue throughout his or her teaching career (Steele, Peterson, Silva, & Padilla, 2009). This type of professional development is sometimes centered on teaching in general and at other times teaching FLs specifically.

There are several different types of professional development models that currently exist in the teaching profession. Several models and suggestions focus solely on the professional development of inservice teachers. Other models and suggestions concentrate on training new teaching assistants (TAs) enrolled in graduate programs. Finally, teaching standards outlined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and NCATE suggest what preservice teachers should be able to do to become successful FL teachers upon completion of their teacher education program (ACTFL, 2002). Geyer (2008) notes that FL teacher education has been acknowledged as an “emerging and expanding field of study with the special mission of educating preservice and inservice language teachers” (p. 628). More and more research studies are being conducted that focus on teacher beliefs, teachers’ practical knowledge, and teachers’ decision-making processes (Geyer, 2008). This type of research helps inform our development and implementation of all models of professional development programs.

## **Review of the Literature**

Schulz (2000) reviewed articles focusing on second language teacher education that were published in the *Modern Language Journal* from 1916 to 1999 and noted that most of the articles were not empirical studies that shed light on effective practices in teacher education. Schulz notes that over the past several decades FL teacher education could have benefitted from empirical studies, which test hypotheses related to FL teacher training and the traditions seen in FL teacher education. In addition, studies are needed that provide empirical evidence of the most effective practices in FL teacher education to add to the knowledge base of FL teacher educators.

For the past 50 years, FL teacher education has been based largely on a positivistic paradigm, which described effective teaching practices gleaned from research literature in general education and on teacher trainers’ perceptions. Until recently, researchers and professionals responsible for teacher development have not sought to establish criteria for assessing effective teaching (Brosh, 1996; Hudelson & Faltis, 1993). While there is little agreement regarding which teaching behaviors constitute effective teaching, researchers agree on some characteristics of effective teaching in general, regardless of subject matter. These characteristics include: enthusiasm/expressiveness, clarity of explanation, and rapport/interaction (Murray, 1991). Researchers also agree that teaching is multidimensional, and that even though these dimensions may vary according to setting and discipline, they are still consistent to some degree across disciplines (Murray, 1991; Murray & Renaud, 1995).

An entire field of research known as teacher effectiveness has focused on investigating certain teacher behaviors and attitudes and their effects on student satisfaction and learning. Criteria for defining effective teaching have changed significantly over the last century. Murray (1991) provides a review of empirical studies dealing with teacher effectiveness research at the postsecondary-level. He highlights those studies investigating specific “low-inference” teaching behaviors rather than global “high-inference” characteristics. Low-inference behaviors are described as concrete, denotable actions of the instructor that can be recorded with little or no inference on the part of an observer. Examples include signals the transition from one topic to the next, addresses individual students by name, and gestures with arms and hands. In contrast, high-inference teacher characteristics can be assessed only through observer inference or judgment. Examples include clarity, student-centeredness, and task orientation. The advantages of low-inference behaviors are that they are easy to operationalize and record for purposes of observational research and are relatively easy to manipulate for purposes of experimental research. Also, it is easier to provide an instructor with diagnostic feedback for improvement of teaching if the focus is on specific, concrete behaviors rather than on vague ones. The disadvantages of examining low-inference behaviors in evaluating teacher effectiveness are that these behaviors do not easily allow the observer to provide an evaluation of the following: instructional goals of a course, the subject matter of a course, the quality of student-student interaction or small group work, or the content of activities and assignments.

Murray (1991) reviews two types of research methods: observational and experimental. In observational approaches, teaching behaviors are observed in their natural settings, and the investigator makes no attempt to control or manipulate variables. Correlations are then drawn between teaching behaviors and outcome measures such as achievement test scores, attitudes toward learning, or ratings of instruction. A benefit of this type of approach is that research findings are based on real teachers in real classrooms, and thus the results can often be applied to other teachers and teaching contexts. A drawback of this approach is that variables are not controlled, and therefore, results cannot be interpreted in terms of cause and effect. In experimental research, variables are controlled and manipulated. In a true experimental design, the researcher systematically manipulates one or more teaching behaviors while holding all other factors constant. True experimental research also depends on large random samples. Since controlled teaching behaviors are the only factors that theoretically vary across experimental conditions, any differences in pre- and post-student outcome measures are assumed to be caused by the teaching behavior in question. The advantage of this type of research is that causal relationships among variables are easier to determine.

The following are conclusions drawn by Murray (1991) regarding the observational studies he reviewed: (a) assessment of low-inference behaviors has been found to show high levels of inter-rater reliability, which indicates that these behaviors can be measured objectively and accurately; (b) classroom teaching behaviors have been shown to make a significant difference in student

attitudes, learning of course content, and motivation for further learning; (c) three dimensions of teaching behavior have consistently emerged as strong predictors of instructional outcomes: enthusiasm/expressiveness, clarity of explanation, and rapport/interaction; (d) the impact of classroom teaching behaviors on student development can be interpreted in terms of cognitive theories of information-processing and learning; (e) teaching behaviors have typically shown an uneven profile of correlations with different instructional outcomes; (f) teacher classroom behaviors vary in different settings, and it has not yet been determined if teaching behaviors that are effective in lecture settings are also effective in other settings, such as in FL teaching; and, (g) within lecture methods, findings suggest that certain teaching behaviors contribute similarly to overall teaching effectiveness regardless of academic discipline.

Murray (1991) drew the following conclusions from the results of the experimental studies he reviewed: (a) in the enthusiasm and clarity domains, classroom teaching behaviors seem to be causal antecedents (rather than mere correlates) of various instructional outcome measures; (b) low-inference teaching behaviors have been shown to influence student instructional ratings and objective measures of student learning; (c) teaching behaviors accounted for a sizable proportion of outcome measure variance in most experiments; (d) the specific teaching behaviors used to define teacher enthusiasm and teacher clarity manipulations in experimental studies were similar to behaviors loading on corresponding enthusiasm and clarity factors in observational studies; and (e) evidence suggests that enthusiastic or expressive classroom teaching behaviors may affect student motivational processes that extend far beyond the classroom.

More recently, updated approaches to teacher training show that teachers gain expertise in FL teaching through socially negotiated experiences in which teachers are educated through encounters in different social situations (Borg, 2003; Freeman, 2002; Johnson & Golombek, 2003). As a result of these experiences, teachers are both “receptors and creators of the knowledge base they apply in numerous decisions in the classroom” (Geyer, 2008, p. 629). These recent studies reflect a general shift in the social sciences to sociocultural trends in teacher training (Johnson, 2006; Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). For example, Lee (2009) discovered that online discussions between experienced teachers and students in FL teaching methods courses provided scaffolding so that students were able to create reflective messages regarding their thoughts about teaching. One student even noted that the experienced teacher played a role similar to his/her methods teacher by “exposing them to insightful ideas on the subject matter” (Lee, 2009, p. 219).

Over the past fifteen years, researchers have explained characteristics that describe behaviors and attitudes of effective FL teachers and activities that may assist FL teacher candidates in becoming successful FL teachers (Bell, 2005; Brosh, 1996; Geyer, 2008; Hudelson & Faltis, 1993; Lee, 2009; Murray, 1991; Murray & Renaud, 1995; Schulz, 2000). Yet it has only been recently that researchers have written about actual models of teacher development that could be useful for FL teacher educators as they prepare new professional FL teachers.

Two of the most effective models of professional development for FL teachers are The Bay Area Foreign Language Program (BALFP) and the Apprenticeship Model. BALFP provides a model for ongoing professional development that is based on recent research and has as its main goal “educator learning and student achievement” (Steele, Peterson, Silva, & Padilla, 2009, p. 196). With these goals to guide this model, BALFP introduces future FL teachers to the importance of ongoing professional development throughout their teaching career. This way, future teachers know that learning to teach does not end with their student teaching. The Apprenticeship Model in place at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada successfully provides two semesters of teacher training for graduate FL TAs before they teach classes on their own. Apprentice TAs work one-on-one with an experienced TA and are “eased into teaching and have the opportunity to develop their teaching skills in a guided and low-pressure environment, which leads to increased confidence” (Kost, 2008, p. 45). They are involved in all aspects of teaching as apprentices without being overwhelmed by the workload of being the primary instructor. The apprentice TAs are required to teach one full week during the first half of their second semester and two full weeks during the second half of their second semester in the apprenticeship program. The hope is that by this point in the apprenticeship, the new TAs are prepared to teach effectively on their own.

In addition to the BALFP and the Apprentice Model, the *ACTFL/NCATE Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers* (2000) set forth by ACTFL in conjunction with NCATE inform teacher educators and future FL teachers what teachers should know and be able to do before entering the teaching profession. The purpose of the *ACTFL/NCATE Program Standards* is explained in its introduction:

The preparation of foreign language teachers is the joint responsibility of the faculty in foreign languages and education. In order for foreign language candidates to attain the knowledge, skills, and dispositions described in the *ACTFL/NCATE Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers*, programs of foreign language teacher preparation must demonstrate that they include the [eight] components and characteristics. (p. 2)

One of the eight main requirements that FL teachers should meet before entering the teaching profession is professional development (ACTFL, 2002). In order for a foreign language teacher education program to be accredited, the program must prepare a report that shows that it meets the requirements for effectively preparing future FL teachers. Thus, accredited programs must demonstrate that their teacher candidates are knowledgeable about professional development and that they have engaged in professional development activities prior to completing their teacher education program. Teacher candidates also must understand that engaging in professional development activities will allow them to (a) “strengthen their own linguistic and cultural competence and promote reflection and practice” (ACTFL, 2002, p. 35); (b) “understand that professional development is a life-

long endeavor and an indispensable asset to becoming a contributing member of the profession” (p. 35); and (c) “enhance their knowledge and expertise with standards” (p. 28). By using the *ACTFL/NCATE Program Standards* as a guide, teacher educators will be able to ensure that teacher candidates are learning the importance of professional development as described by ACTFL, the national umbrella professional organization for FL teachers of all languages and at all levels.

### **Professional Development**

This article outlines three ways professional development can be introduced in preservice FL teacher education programs so that in-service FL teachers can help prepare future FL teachers to become professionals in their early careers by (a) providing active mentoring during the FL major and throughout the first three years of teaching, (b) communicating good teaching practices, and (c) encouraging involvement in professional development opportunities and professional organizations.

#### *Active Mentoring*

Hall (2001) defines mentoring as “the process by which practicing members of the profession who are considered experts in their teaching field share their expertise with others through structured activities” (p. 232). The state of Oklahoma began a mentoring program in August, 2008 for teachers new to the field of FL teaching, new teachers, and teachers new to Oklahoma. Several expert teachers in the state agreed to serve as mentors to these new teachers. Each FL educator teaching for the first time in the state of Oklahoma is required to complete a resident year during which time a committee that consists of an administrator of the school (usually the principal), a mentor teacher assigned by the administrator (this mentor may or may not be a FL teacher and usually is not), and a university professor whose area of expertise is FL teaching monitors the new teacher. Each committee member observes the teacher at least three different times during the academic year. In addition, twice during that year, the committee meets to review the new teacher’s teaching and integration in the profession. If the teacher is new to the state, the teacher is made aware of the state language association and the state’s mentoring program at the first meeting of the academic year. Upon successful completion of the resident year, the teacher is recommended for licensure in the state of Oklahoma. All new teachers over the past two years have agreed to be assigned to an expert teacher in the area as a mentor.

As part of this mentoring program, we plan for all FL education majors to be paired during their junior year of undergraduate study with an experienced, successful FL teacher at a school near his or her university. Students will meet with their mentor on a regular basis to establish a relationship and to learn how the mentor teaches. During the first semester of the junior year, the student will spend 30-60 hours in the mentor’s classroom observing, teaching, and receiving feedback from the mentor teacher. During the second semester of the junior year,



the mentor will continue to play a role in the student's education throughout the semester-long internship and during the first three years of teaching, minimally.

Mentoring is almost always an integral part of preservice field experiences in FL education programs. In Oklahoma, teacher candidates are currently assigned to work closely with a cooperating teacher three different times prior to the student teaching internship: once during their sophomore year, once during their junior year, and once during their senior year. Often, the mentor assigned to a senior teacher candidate is one with whom he or she has already worked during his or her previous field experience. The teacher candidate works with each experienced cooperating teacher for an entire semester. At three different times during the semester, the teacher candidate observes his or her teaching style, teaches a few short lessons in the teacher's classroom, and shadows the teacher in all of his or her duties in the classroom and the school. If the cooperating teacher is a good fit for the teacher candidate, he or she will be asked to become the mentor for the teacher candidate. The mentor teacher will work closely with the teacher candidate throughout the junior year, senior year, internship, and the first three years of teaching, even though the teacher candidate has different cooperating teachers in new field experience placements. Following a field experience, the mentor can provide a sympathetic ear, advice on how to handle teaching and professional situations, assistance for creating new types of assessment, etc. Hall (2001) notes that research on this type of mentoring has proven to be beneficial to the professional development of teacher candidates and that the relationship between cooperating teacher and teacher candidate usually extends to a collegial relationship that lasts beyond the field experience.

### *Communication of Good Teaching Practices*

The communication of good teaching practices is a critical part of teacher training from the earliest stages of the FL education major. Future teachers must know early on what the profession considers to be effective FL teaching. This communication can be done in a variety of ways. First, teacher candidates can complete a teaching methods course. One of the main goals of this course is for teacher candidates to learn about and experience good teaching practices. Second, the author suggests a workshop during the junior year during which students complete a questionnaire on which they rank the behaviors and attitudes of effective FL teachers, and then compare their responses with those of a nationwide survey containing the same questionnaire items (Bell, 2005). A follow-up discussion can shed light on students' views of good teaching and the areas of FL teaching the students need to research further. Third, future teachers can observe lessons given by experienced teachers and reflect on what worked well and why, what did not work well and why, and what could be changed to improve the lesson from both an instructional and student learning standpoint. Even though most teaching methods courses provide teaching demonstrations and opportunities for teacher candidates to critique teaching, most teacher candidates at the University of Oklahoma agree that learning by observing experienced teachers and reflecting on what they observe provides them with examples of good teaching practices.

Finally, future teachers should have several opportunities to teach short lessons themselves and participate in the same reflection exercise mentioned previously. As preservice teachers learn good teaching practices, are able to identify good teaching practices in teaching situations, and are able to reflect on good teaching practices in their own teaching, teacher candidates will be able to better prepare lesson plans to allow them to use good teaching practices. It will also build their confidence so that they can be effective teachers and will help them feel more comfortable establishing professional relationships with other teachers. This confidence may also increase the likelihood that teacher candidates become more actively involved in professional organizations through which they will be able to learn innovative ways of teaching, meet other teachers who have similar interests, and present what they know works effectively in their own classrooms.

### *Active Participation in Professional Organizations*

A third important way teacher candidates can become professionals prior to the completion of their program is for professors to instill in them the importance of belonging to professional organizations, being active members of professional organizations, even as students, and attending meetings of professional organizations and professional development workshops to both learn and network. Developing an understanding of and participating actively in professional organizations is so vital for FL teachers that Shrum and Glisan (2005) introduce the importance of becoming familiar with the FL teaching profession and professional expectations for FL teachers in the preliminary chapter of their *Teacher's Handbook*. In this chapter, students are introduced to major national professional organizations that are important to FL teachers (ACTFL, language-specific professional organizations, and organizations that offer professional resources and support to FL teachers), regional language conferences, state language associations, major professional journals, and FL teacher standards (ACTFL, 2002; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2001). Shrum and Glisan (2005) also note that

[p]rofessional organizations have collaborated with one another as never before in order to set professional goals, establish policies, and offer their constituents valuable support and assistance. History will mark the past five years as a pivotal time period in foreign language education as our profession came together to articulate its expectations for language teachers in terms of standards for teacher candidates, beginning teachers, and more accomplished teachers. (p. 1)

All FL teachers can benefit from membership in professional organizations specific for FL teachers because they will discover what FL teachers are expected to know and be able to do in the classroom and in the profession. ACTFL encourages its members to take part in defining these expectations by providing feedback on position statements and on professional matters and sharing their

opinions and experiences with others in the profession in the publication *The Language Educator*.

Many experienced teachers in the field are already members of national, regional, and state professional organizations. Some are more actively involved than others for various reasons, such as cost of membership, lack of interest, feeling they have no extra time to become involved, lack of knowledge of professional organizations, and/or lack of understanding of the benefits of membership. New teachers in their first year of teaching can benefit from becoming members of professional organizations from this first year. Most organizations offer a reduced membership rate for teachers in their first year, some offer a free mentorship, and some offer scholarships to first-time conference attendees.

In Oklahoma, teacher candidates are required to attend at least two conferences of the Oklahoma Foreign Language Teachers' Association (OFLTA) and write reflection papers about the benefits of attending the conferences. In September, 2009, fourteen teacher candidates attended the OFLTA Fall Conference for the first time. Two students commented in their reflection papers that they were not looking forward to attending the conference at all and were surprised that they really enjoyed the day-long conference. Benefits of attendance mentioned by both of these students included noting the enthusiasm for FL teaching among conference attendees, learning innovative ways of teaching, networking, and speaking the target language with other FL teachers in the state. All the students I have supervised over the past five years have continued attending OFLTA conferences after attending the two required conferences. By attending professional conferences on a regular basis and being actively involved in professional organizations before completing their program, teacher candidates are able to start the habit of being actively involved and attending conferences as often as possible because they learned as students the importance of doing so.

## Conclusion

A crucial responsibility of teacher education programs is to prepare teacher candidates to become professionals prior to the completion of their program. Yet, research studies to date have not identified effective approaches to preparing future professional FL teachers. Until research studies of this nature are conducted and the results of such studies are made available, FL teacher educators must rely on existing models as guides. The recent alignment of ACTFL's program standards to prepare FL teachers with NCATE (ACTFL, 2002) has served as one such guide, stressing the responsibility teacher educators have to instill in teacher candidates the importance of becoming professionals by being involved in an active mentoring relationship as early on in their teacher career as possible, communicating good teaching practices, and becoming actively involved in professional organizations at the national, regional, and state levels. Further, because teacher candidates do not learn everything they need to know about professional development from teacher education courses, FL teachers candidates need to receive training outside of their required coursework so that they can become professionals from the very beginning of their careers. Teacher educators, professors who mentor teacher

candidates (both within colleges of education and foreign language departments), and mentor teachers in public schools are responsible for assisting teacher candidates in realizing the importance of professional development before they enter their own classrooms as teachers.

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# 5

## **L2 Learning and L2 Teaching: Approximating and Appropriating Language and Culture**

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### **Introduction**

**I**n the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our access to more and more technology tools and resources that help to mediate second language (L2) teaching and learning continues to grow at an increasingly faster pace. This means that every classroom teacher can access native speakers and authentic texts on a daily basis. In addition to this abundance of authentic resources, teachers are encountering an ever increasing diversity of learning styles and needs in their classrooms and find themselves striving to differentiate their instruction to meet students' needs. Yet another responsibility of current L2 teachers is to incorporate the national standards for foreign language learning (1999) into their daily lesson plans. All of this is done with the hope that students will become life-long learners and users of the target language and that they will acquire new perspectives through their language learning experiences that will help them to approximate the community of practice of native speakers and appropriate their language and culture.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a theoretical framework, and resultant portfolio of language and culture learning, for language students. The portfolio connects theory and research findings to practice and helps L2 teachers guide their students to accomplish such goals. The paper will also address how the same framework and similar activities help pre-service L2 teachers approximate the community of practice of professional L2 teachers and appropriate their language and culture.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of the portfolio project presented in this paper is based on sociocultural theory along with three related theories of learning: activity theory, sociocultural theory of action, and apprenticeship within a community of practice. In addition, the portfolio project adheres tightly to the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1999).

### *Sociocultural Theory*

Sociocultural theory originated in the writings of Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist who posited that the smallest unit of analysis for understanding human cognition is the word, a single word. According to Vygotsky (1978), a word allows us to think and mediates our thinking and, therefore, our ability to do things. Wertsch (1998) uses the analogy of a pole vaulter to explain this theory: the pole mediates the pole vaulter's ability to jump and allows the athlete to jump much higher than could be done without the use of the pole. Thus, just as the pole vaulter uses a pole to help him jump, language learners also use certain tools (like words) to mediate their learning of a L2.

Another important concept in sociocultural theory is the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). In this zone, learners can only accomplish certain tasks with the assistance of a mediational tool. A mediational tool can be certain words or even a more experienced peer who can help the learner accomplish a task by giving only the assistance the learner needs, a process known as scaffolding. A learner moves through a given ZPD when he/she internalizes a process, often done through private-speech, appropriates the needed knowledge and/or tool, and subsequently performs the task on his/her own. It is the movement through the ZPD that leads to learning. Through continued practice and repetition, the knowledge and/or tool becomes automatic, and automaticity is achieved. Vygotsky (1978) believed that learners could move through the ZPD in this manner only if they were allowed to exercise their agency to engage in the activity.

### *Activity Theory*

Drawing upon the writings of German philosophers Kant, Hegel, Marx, and Engels, Russian psychologists Vygotsky, Leont'ev, and Luria constructed the framework of activity theory (Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999). Activity theory allows for a broader notion of mediational tools by allowing cultural artifacts, also called cultural tools, to mediate our cognition as well. Cultural artifacts are "the 'carriers' of sociocultural patterns and knowledge" (Wertsch, 1994, p.204). According to Kozulin (2003), cultural tools are "those symbolic artifacts—signs, symbols, texts, formulae, graphic organizers—that when internalized help individuals master their own psychological functions of perception, memory, attention, and so on" (pp. 15-16). He also proposes that each culture has its own set of situations that are appropriate for using these tools. He believes that one of the most powerful tools is that of "literacy in its different forms" (p. 16). This is



supported by Swain (2000) who claims, "Language, as a particularly powerful semiotic tool, mediates our physical and mental activities. As a cognitive tool, it regulates others and ourselves" (p. 104). Cole and Engeström (1993) regard computers, audio and video recordings, and films as cultural tools as well. They assert that they have "enabled us to interact with the phenomenon of the mind in a more sophisticated way" (p. 43).

A contemporary model of activity theory portrays the relationships between the different key elements of the theory (Engeström, 1999). In this model, represented by a triangle, "Tools" are located at the top with "Rules" at the lower left hand corner and "Division of Labor" at the right. Between Tools and Rules on the left-hand side of the triangle is "Subject", between "Tools" and "Division of Labor" on the right-hand side of the triangle is "Object" with an arrow pointing to the right indicating that all of the activity transpiring leads to a "Goal," and between "Division of Labor" and "Rules" at the base of the triangle is "Community." Within the triangle is "Production" or the activity/work that is transpiring. The following classroom activity using the Internet to talk to native speakers in a Spanish classroom illustrates how the model operates.

In this example, the mediating tools or cultural artifacts would be the computer, the Internet, and the software application used, as there are many ways to communicate with native speakers on-line. The subject would be the individual students and their related attitudes, opinions, histories, and interests. The object of the activity is to communicate with native speakers on-line with the goal being to approximate the Hispanic community, the community of practice, through their discourse to increase students' proficiency. The rules would be the structure and guidelines provided by the teacher for the classroom activity, and indirectly by the rules of operation of the software application that allows for the interaction. The community would be the Hispanic community, students' attitudes towards the Hispanic community, and any related community structure, such as university or classroom communities. The division of labor would be the way in which work is divided in order to complete the task. The production would be what students actually do, or their experience engaging with the mediating tools of portfolio activities consisting of cultural artifacts. All of these variables interact and affect the manner in which they cooperatively mediate the students' experience.

### *Sociocultural Theory of Action*

Wertsch (1998) developed a related theory he calls the sociocultural theory of action. This theory claims that human action, what people do, is the unit of analysis for understanding human cognition. Cultural tools mediate human cognition through mediated action. Typically, mediated action has multiple, simultaneous goals, is situated on one or more developmental paths, can constrain as well as enable action, and is usually transformational.

When Wertsch's ideas are applied to activity theory, it becomes evident that engaging students in the culture of the L2 as a mediational tool plays a key role in their increased understanding of the language and culture. While teachers' learning goals for students' engagement in certain activities may be increasing

their language proficiency, there are a multitude of possible goals students may have for engaging in the same activity, such as earning points for a grade, being attracted to the native speaker on-line, fear of negative consequences (from a variety of sources) for not doing the activity, and the joy that comes from learning by interacting with a person from another country in the L2. In addition to having multiple, varying goals, students enrolled in the same L2 class often have varying language proficiency levels. Thus, students' peers may also be mediational tools in this context providing scaffolding or suggestions for level-appropriate activities. The mediation that transpires during the learning process can have a positive or a negative effect on students' learning, and the result of students' engagement in a mediated, goal-oriented activity is usually transformational. This means that it reflects the influence of the dominant mediational means in the student's learning experience, and it usually results in a change within the individual engaging in the activity. For example, students may feel more comfortable interacting with native speakers and/or more accepting of their culture, adapt to and adopt new mediational tools for language learning, or find an innovative way to engage in language learning. Of course, negative results of the above examples are possible as well (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999).

### *Apprenticeship within a Community of Practice*

Apprenticeship, a concept that is related closely to the process of mediation, was influenced by both sociocultural theory and activity theory. It refers to one who is about to or who is in the process of learning a particular skill, what Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as "newcomers" (p. 29). In our profession, students can be seen as apprentices in learning language, in language teaching, or in the understanding of the products, practices, and perspectives of another culture. Rogoff (1990) describes the role of apprenticeship in relation to sociocultural and activity theory and thereby mediation. She sees

children as apprentices in thinking, active in their efforts to learn from observing and participating with peers and more skilled members of their society, developing skills to handle culturally defined problems with available tools, and building from these givens to construct new solutions within the context of sociocultural activity. (Rogoff, 1990, p. 7)

Second language learners are much like children in this respect because they too are learning linguistic and cultural systems.

Lave and Wenger (1991) add to the theory of apprenticeship through their notion of situated learning, meaning that all learning and activity take place in the context of the individual, the activity itself, and the world and its cultures, with some being more influential than others, within a community of practice. The community of practice consists of the "old-timers" (p. 29), for example native speakers or veteran teachers. They view the ZPD from an activity theory viewpoint. However, Engeström and Miettinen (1999) claim that the community of practice is the mediational means of situated learning and therefore is the

unit of analysis. The appropriation of the knowledge of a community of practice is related to Rogoff's (1990) notion of apprenticeship. According to Lave and Wenger (1991),

The practice of the community creates the potential 'curriculum' in the broadest sense – that which may be learned by newcomers with legitimate peripheral access. Learning activity appears to have a characteristic pattern. There are strong goals for learners because learners, as peripheral participants, can develop a view of what the whole enterprise is about, and what there is to be learned. Learning itself is an improvised practice: A learning curriculum unfolds in opportunities for engagement in practice. It is not specified as a set of dictates for proper practice. (p. 93)

They go onto say,

It crucially involves *participation* as a way of learning—of both absorbing and being absorbed—in the 'culture of practice'. An extended period of legitimate peripherality provides learners with opportunities to make the culture of practice theirs. From a broadly peripheral perspective, apprentices gradually assemble a general idea of what constitutes the practice of a community. This uneven sketch of the enterprise (available if there is legitimate access) might include who is involved; what they do; what everyday life is like; how masters talk; walk; work; and generally conduct their lives; how people who are not part of the community of practice interact with it; what other learners are doing; and what learners need to learn to become full practitioners. (p.95)

In our context, this means that what students learn as they engage in doing portfolio activities relates to their learning goals thus creating a "best fit" curriculum for each student. They begin to feel more like members of the L2 community as they share what they did for their portfolio activities with their fellow classmates (apprentices) and through the new understanding that they gain as described by "the sketch" that they begin to see.

According to H. G. Grabois (personal communication, September 03, 2004):

The idea is that we move from the periphery toward a center of a community of practice. So [...] maybe the crucial thing is not learning several rules of grammar or the preterit or something like that, but moving from the periphery of a discourse to moving toward the center of a discourse.

Approximating the community of practice of the target language provides teachers with the opportunity to observe how their students are learning within the ZPD by working with resources from that community.

Grabois continues by saying that when students engage in and interact with portfolio activities, their activities more authentically reflect those of the target language community. This level of authenticity can be achieved through students' interactions with individuals or with texts. Here Grabois uses "text" in the broad sense to include music, film, art, etc. (Grabois, personal communication, September 03, 2004).

Notice how these related theories connect and move from a single word

- to words;
- to others' words;
- to texts;
- to photos and pictures;
- to music;
- to videos and films;
- to rules;
- to the individual and his/her attitudes, perspectives and history, instruments, division of labor, goals, and community; and
- to the culture of the community of practice as a unit of analysis for understanding human cognition.

The theme of mediation exists throughout all of these adaptations of Vygotsky's original ideas. If moving through the ZPD is the key to proficiency, then we must provide opportunities for students to engage with these mediational tools in all of their varieties. One cannot doubt the connection between language and culture or its impact on who we are currently and who we might become.

### *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

The framework for the portfolio projects described here also includes the national standards in foreign language education (1999). The variety of activities included in the portfolio was designed to meet the five standards of communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities (see Table 1, pp. 80-81). For example, students complete the activities outside of the classroom, enabling life-long learning habits to develop and time in the classroom to be freed up for other activities that require student-teacher or student-student interaction. There are activities that allow students to work with authentic aural, visual, and written texts that foster interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational communication. The activity sheet (see Table 2, p. 82), used to document student learning, provides students an opportunity to engage in presentational communication. Cultural products, practices, and perspectives are addressed by the student on the activity sheet, which allows the students to make cultural comparisons and develop cross-cultural understanding. Because students can choose the texts that they interact with, students can connect to many other disciplines for real-life purposes. Finally, students are able to engage with native speakers in both their local community and the global community through several activities as well.

### **Applying the Theoretical Framework to Portfolio Activities**

In addition to incorporating the national standards as discussed above, the portfolio also reflects the other aspects of the theoretical framework by using mediational tools, such as authentic texts from a variety of genres and discourses in both written and spoken forms; audio, video, and digital images; computers and the technologies that they access (many of which facilitate negotiation of meaning with native speakers); activities that students normally do (ex., listening

to music, surfing the Internet, writing messages on Facebook, and watching videos and movies); students' goals (reasons for taking Spanish or career goals), interests, motivations, and their ability to choose activities to meet these goals; interaction with organizations and institutions, native speakers, and communities (both global on-line and local); and, the culture of the target language. All of these mediational tools engage students in authentic texts and enable students to improve their appropriation of the target language and culture moving them through their own ZPD(s). As students engage in portfolio activities, they become more proficient in the target language and culture and over time become closer to, or part of, the community of practice of the target language and culture.

The purpose of the portfolio is to include a variety of mediational learning tools that are both relevant and accessible to the course and the students. Howard Grabois, currently Assistant Professor at East North Carolina University, first conceived of this activity-based portfolio. He wanted students in his classes to engage in activities in Spanish outside of class in order to earn course credit. Together, we created the portfolio cover sheet that standardized the points students earned (Table 1). More points were given to those activities that required more negotiation of meaning with native speakers. I created the activity sheet (Table 2) to scaffold students' learning and to provide a mechanism whereby students could explain the meaningfulness of their learning experience(s) to the teacher to reflect the number of points they should receive for their work. Students typically complete three portfolios per semester and can earn a maximum of 40 points per portfolio. For each portfolio, students give an oral presentation on one portfolio activity to share what they learned with the class. The only required activity is the *lectura* [reading] in which students must find two authentic texts on-line related to the units currently being covered in class. The list of activities from which the students can choose changes from semester to semester as there are always new mediational tools, often technology-based, that can be used for language learning.

There are so many ways to engage in language learning today due to the many technological tools that we have access to via the Internet. These portfolio activities allow for student-centered learning in that students can exercise their agency and choose to complete those activities that best meet their learning styles and preferences, language learning goals, abilities, and personal interests as well as the activities that students find to be motivating, enjoyable, meaningful, and worthwhile. Using a portfolio of activities, therefore, facilitates the implementation of differentiated instruction.

Since students often have multiple goals and are on different developmental paths (Wertsch, 1998), the portfolio facilitates a student-centered approach to teaching and differentiates language instruction. Students' engagement in portfolio activities outside of class transforms the students and the L2 classroom. It changes the students, their knowledge of the target language and culture, their language learning abilities, and their perceptions of the language and culture, which in turn change the cultural products, practices, and perceptions of the L2 classroom. This generally facilitates an increase in motivation and time on task,

**Table 1.** Portfolio activities for learning and improving approximation and appropriation of the Spanish language and culture

**CARPETA DE ACTIVIDADES PARA APRENDER Y MEJORAR EL ESPAÑOL**

Actividad	Descripción	Puntos
<b>Cuaderno</b>	<i>¿Qué Te Parece?</i> workbook: Must be done in one color and corrected in another. (maximum 10 pts/portfolio)	
<b>Actividades de <i>¿Qué Te Parece?</i></b>	Choose one of the activities found at the end of the unit on the page entitled, <i>¿Qué Te Parece?</i> Turn it in with an Hoja de Actividades. (maximum 5 pts/activity, maximum 10 pts/portfolio)	
<b>Conversation partners</b>	Meet with a classmate and talk in Spanish about topics presented in <i>¿Qué Te Parece?</i> Submit using an Hoja de Actividades. 100 words in Spanish. (10 pts/hr)	
<b>Comprensión auditiva</b>	Import your favorite Spanish music or listening activities into Audacity. Print out the lyrics. Listen to it at normal speed and mark the words you can't decipher. Slow it down until you can decipher each word and then gradually work back up to speed. Report on your listening experience using an Hoja de Actividades. (5 pts/30min., 5 pts/portfolio)	
<b>Películas y programas de televisión</b>	Watch a movie, on-line video (ex., YouTube), SCOLA, or TV program in Spanish. Submit a summary/commentary using an Hoja de Actividades. 100 words in Spanish. (10 pts/hr, 10 pts/portfolio)	
<b>Lectura</b>	Required. Read two articles in print or on-line related to topics in <i>¿Qué Te Parece?</i> Submit a citation and summary/commentary using an Hoja de Actividades. 75 words in Spanish. (5 pts/reading, maximum 10 pts/portfolio)	
<b>Práctica de vocabulario</b>	Using on-line images or your own digital photos, create a vocabulary slideshow. Each image will appear on two slides. The first will be just the image and the second will show the vocabulary word underlined and used in a sentence. (5 pts/slideshow & 5 pts for presenting it in class, 10 pts/portfolio)	
<b>Práctica de gramática</b>	Practice grammar concepts presented in <i>¿Qué Te Parece?</i> using studyspanish.com or Rosetta Stone. Print your work with your answers and scores. (10 pts/hr, 10 pts/portfolio)	

<b>Interacción cultural</b>	Attend a Hispanic activity/event/festival (ex., go to mass in Spanish, El Centro Latinoamericano, etc.) (min. 30 minutes must be approved) (5 pts/activity, maximum 10 pts/portfolio) Meet with a native speaker to converse in Spanish about topics presented in <i>¿Qué Te Parece?</i> May be done in pairs. Submit using an Hoja de Actividades. 100 words in Spanish. (10 pts/15 minute conversation, 20 pts maximum/portfolio)	
<b>Interacción por Facebook</b>	It's Spanish ONLY in the Habladores F09 group. Reply to topic questions, post new vocabulary you've learned on the wall, converse with classmates, get help with your Spanish, and help others. Keep track of time spent and self-evaluate. (10 pts/hr, maximum 10 points)	
<b>Interacción por Internet</b>	Interaction (written and/or oral) with native speakers over the Internet. Use topics in <i>¿Qué Te Parece?</i> See Dr. Storm for Skype and epals details. Submit using an Hoja de Actividades. 50-100 words in Spanish. (5 pts/20 minute encounter, maximum 15 pts/portfolio)	
<b>Reflexiones</b>	Write reflections on language learning. See Dr. Storm for assigned topics. 100 words in English and/or complete the Galería de Arte at the beginning of the unit (answer the questions in Spanish). Use an Hoja de Actividades to report on each activity. (5 pts/activity, maximum 10 pts/portfolio)	
<b>Expresión creativa</b>	Express yourself in Spanish using Atajo or toondoo.com. Write a poem, song, story, or comic strip using topics in <i>¿Qué Te Parece?</i> (min. 1 page, must represent significant effort at self expression) (5 pts/portfolio)	
<b>Investigación cultural</b>	Investigate topics related to Hispanic cultures. 100 words in Spanish with documented sources. Use an Hoja de Actividades. (5 pts/topic, maximum 10 pts/portfolio)	
<b>Otra composición</b>	Do the other composition option for the unit. (5 pts)	
<b>Ayuda y aprende</b>	Participate in a Service Learning program. See Dr. Storm for details. Submit an Hoja de Actividades and write a 50-100 word reflection in Spanish. (20 pts/portfolio)	
<b>Total</b>	Determined by Dr. Storm	Total Portfolio Points

**Table 2.** Activity sheet for learning and improving approximation and appropriation of the Spanish language and culture.

## HOJA DE ACTIVIDADES

**Estudiante:****Actividad:****Fecha:****Tiempo:** \_\_\_\_ minutos**Puntos ganados:**     /

<b>Vocabulario aprendido</b>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span><b>español</b></span> <span><b>inglés</b></span> </div> <div style="display: flex;"> <div style="width: 10%;"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. </div> <div style="width: 90%;"></div> </div>		<b>Observaciones de gramática</b>  <div style="height: 100px;"></div>
<b>Resumen</b>  <div style="height: 100px;"></div>		
<b>Cómo esta actividad me ha ayudado aprender más sobre la cultura hispana. Explica algunas conexiones entre los productos, prácticas y perspectivas.</b> [How this activity helped me learn more about Hispanic culture. Explain some connections between products, practices, and perspectives.]  <div style="height: 100px;"></div>		

two influential variables that determine success in L2 learning (Shrum & Glisan, 2005). Ultimately, this learning activity promotes a change in the culture of the L2 classroom and learning environment. Because many of the portfolio activities are based on real-world experiences outside the classroom, the likelihood that these activities become tools for life-long learning is great.

Storm (2005) found that students moved from the periphery toward the community of practice of the target language and culture depending on the affordances and constraints that resulted from their perspectives related to the variables of the activity theory model. Or in other words, how they are situated within the activity theory of learning, as previously described, when they engage



in portfolio activities. He recommends that teachers help students understand what their individual and collective perspectives are for the variables of the activity theory model, as they can either enable or constrain students' learning experiences. Storm also suggests teaching students about the theoretical framework of the portfolio and how it affects what they learn.

The following list of guiding questions could help students understand how to apply many of the components of this theoretical framework to their own language learning experiences.

*Subject:* What is the student's background and previous language learning experience? Why is the student enrolled in school in general and, in particular, in a L2 class? What are the expectations of the student's family? What are the student's attitudes towards the L2 and the portfolio in general? How does the student conceptualize him/herself as a language learner? How does the student define language learning? How does the student think that he/she learns a language?

*Object and Goal:* Why does the student engage in portfolio activities? What are the student's expectations for the results of his/her portfolios? Does the student see portfolio activities as opportunities? Does the student have any goals that direct his/her choice of activities or that impact how he/she completes activities? Does the student value what he/she does for an activity or only the points received for doing an activity?

*Cultural Artifacts/Tools:* Do portfolio activities increase a student's interest in the target language and culture? Does the student surf the Internet in the same manner in English as in the L2? Does the student feel that portfolios mediate their learning, help him/her do things that he/she could not do on his/her own, or make it possible to do certain things? To what degree does the student see the portfolio's potential for learning the L2 outside the classroom and for life-long learning and use of the L2? Does the student see any similarities between portfolio activities and study abroad? What are the student's attitudes towards portfolio activities? Do students feel that the portfolio provides them with tools for learning language? How does technology help the students learn when completing portfolio activities? Do reflections help students appropriate what they have learned?

*Production:* When does the student complete the portfolios? How does the student complete the portfolios? How does doing portfolio activities affect the student's motivation for language and culture learning? Do the student's likes and dislikes play a role when he/she engages in portfolio activities? Does the student feel that he/she is becoming better at completing portfolio activities and does that result in better language learning ability? What does the student think he/she could do to improve the quality of his/her portfolios?

*Rules:* Does the student feel that portfolios empower or limit him/her as a second language learner? Is the portfolio authoritative or authoritarian for the student?

*Community:* How does the student define the L2 community portrayed at the center of the model for approximating a community of practice? What are the student's attitudes towards the L2 community? Does the student feel that doing

portfolios increases his/her engagement in language and/or culture learning and his/ her involvement with L2 communities?

*Division of Labor:* How does the student manage his/her time in completing the portfolios? Did anyone collaborate with the student as he/she completed portfolio activities? What's the purpose of the activity sheet? Does the student feel that the activity sheets increase their learning? What was helpful to the student? What role did the student's teacher play? What role did the student think the teacher should have played?

These questions could be realized through a class discussion, via individual conversations with students, and/or a survey. Working with students in this manner aims to improve students' approximation toward and appropriation of the target language and culture of the community of practice. Through this understanding, it is hoped that students engage in using cultural tools as they negotiate their way through the learning process of becoming a competent, full-fledged participant in the community of practice (Wertsch, 1991).

### **Making the Connection to Pre-Service Teachers**

The theoretical framework presented here can also be used to connect with pre-service teachers in teacher education programs. Through the following reflective questions, pre-service teachers are encouraged to focus on reaching their true teaching potential. Notice how the questions apply equally to preparing to teach language as they apply to learning a language.

Just as learners of a foreign language are typically at a novice- or intermediate-level in the college classroom, pre-service teachers might be considered at a novice- or intermediate-level of teaching ability. The language that L2 educators use is the language of teaching, which may be as foreign as the target language itself for many pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers are in the process of appropriating the language of teaching, or making it their own, from the community of practice of teachers; that is, the professors of their courses, their advisors, their cooperating teachers in the public schools, and the researchers whose work they read. So if their goal really is to become the very best teacher that they can be, how do they and how will they approximate this community of practice? Do they see the members of the community of practice as meditational tools that can enable them to do things as a teacher that they would not have been able to do on their own?

Pre-service teachers should take advantage of the opportunities for professional development that their methods professors and cooperating in-service teachers provide by engaging with them. They should talk with professors, network with in-service teachers, and read journal articles and research findings. Pre-service teachers should consider their goals and consider them often. They need to ask, when I enroll in a class is it merely to fulfill graduation requirement or to engage in the discourse and language of teaching through a variety of meditational tools so I can develop my teaching potential? Am I doing assignments and projects that will be meaningful to me and my future students, or am I doing those activities that are the easiest, fastest, or that receive the most points? Pre-service language teachers need to be reminded that time spent on task and their motivation are

two important variables for successful language learning. Thus, they should ask themselves: Am I spending an appropriate amount of time on task, or am I doing the bare minimum to satisfy the basic requirements? Can I identify tools that mediate my learning experiences and appropriation of the language and culture of teaching? Can I teach my own students how to use these tools to meet their learning needs? Am I reflective about my learning process about the discourse of language teaching?

Pre-service teachers should also be encouraged to reflect on the culture of language teaching. For example, how can the culture of language teachers be identified and how can pre-service teachers then engage with it through meditational tools? Culture, as defined by the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (1999), has three components: products, perspectives, and practices that are lenses through which culture can be understood. The following section includes examples of the culture of teaching and related reflection questions for pre-service teachers.

*Products:* What are the products of good teaching? Some examples of products include lesson plans, technology implementation, successful classroom management, journal articles, action research findings, conference presentations, and interested and motivated students that experience a change resultant of the meditational and transformational learning processes discussed earlier. Thus, we need to ask our pre-service teachers: How will you engage with and use the products that other language teachers have created? What will the products that you create for your teaching career look like? What creative ideas, research findings, and theories will your lesson plans contain?

*Practices:* What are the practices of good teaching? In the spring of 2008, Clifford, then President of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, noted that good teaching comes from “teachers who are experts in the subjects they teach *and* who pass on that expertise in a way that motivates students not only to learn the lesson before them, but to continue their learning beyond the classroom” (p. 5). In other words, the culture of teaching includes knowing your subject matter and demonstrating to your students that you care about them and their learning experiences. All of the practices that good teachers engage in, including classroom management strategies, differentiation of instruction, corrective feedback, providing students opportunities to exercise their agency, linking content to real-world applications and to students’ lives, etc., are an end to these two means.

*Perspectives:* What are the perspectives of good teachers? This could include one’s theoretical and philosophical approach to teaching. We all have personal beliefs about teaching whether we recognize them or not. The goal for pre-service teachers is to be able to develop these beliefs and articulate them by the end of their program of study. Pre-service teachers should be encouraged to be open to new ideas and perspectives about teaching and learning, since it is often true that we teach in the way that we were taught. Some examples of perspectives might be: every student is capable of learning and succeeding; every student deserves a clean slate each day despite what might have occurred the day before; I prescribe

**Table 3.** Portfolio activities for learning and improving approximation and appropriation of language teachers' language and culture.**METHODS PORTFOLIO COVER SHEET**

Activity	Description	Points
Personal language improvement	Pick something that you'd like to improve related to your language skills and work on it. Required: 30min.-60 min./wk. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
Culture learning	Learn more about the culture of the language that you are going to teach. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
Cultural activity	Create a cultural activity. See Hispanet. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
Observe a L2 class of a language you don't know	@ UNI. See Appendix 1.3 on-line. Report using an activity sheet. Limit 2	10/hr
Observe and compare beginning, intermediate, or advanced L2 classes	@ UNI. See Appendix 1.3 on-line. Report using an activity sheet. Limit 2	10/hr
Teacher interview	Interview a L2 teacher and ask him/her questions about his/her job, how he/she does things, his/her philosophy of teaching and learning, etc. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
Help a teacher in the classroom	@ UNI or Public School. See Appendix 1.3 on-line. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
Help teach something	@ UNI or Public School. See Appendix 1.3 on-line. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
Help give oral tests	@ UNI or Public School. See Appendix 1.3 on-line. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
Help give a listening comp. test	@ UNI or Public School. See Appendix 1.3 on-line. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
Help grade papers	@ UNI or Public School. See Appendix 1.3 on-line. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
Write and/or present and/or direct a skit	Create and/or present and/or direct a skit for a language class. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
Technology application	Prepare a technology application for teaching/learning a language OR learn how to use some new technology for teaching or learning a language. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
Attend a conference	Use an activity sheet to write-up each session. You'll probably want to take notes during the sessions to aid you in writing them up. Limit 6 sessions	10/session
Join a related organization	Report using an activity sheet. Limit 3	10/ea
Read a journal article	Report using an activity sheet. Limit 5 articles	10/hr
Read a book	Read a book related to L2 teaching and/or learning	10/hr
On-line video	Watch the on-line video for the book or <a href="http://www.learner.org/resources/series185.html">http://www.learner.org/resources/series185.html</a> . Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
Textbook evaluation and use the supplementary materials of a textbook	Go to the IRTZ in 222 Schindler. See Teacher's Handbook Ch 2 and in particular pp. 59-60 and <i>Bringing the Standards for Foreign Language Learning to Life</i> by Blaz (2002) Ch 7 for things to consider. Report using an activity sheet. Limit 5	10/hr

<b>Visit the AEA</b>	Learn about and browse through the resources available here. Report using an activity sheet. Limit 1	10/visit
<b>Community service</b>	See Dr. Storm for ideas and approval. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
<b>Neophyte tape (Can be done digitally too.)</b>	Find someone who has never studied the language you teach (a neophyte) and ask for his/her help. Find or write a paragraph of 25-50 words that contains many of the critical sounds of the language. Use a tape recorder to record the neophyte's 1 <sup>st</sup> reading, and then, after some teaching/coaching from you, record their 2 <sup>nd</sup> reading. Describe your experience and results achieved on an activity sheet. Limit 1	10/hr
<b>Prepare a song</b>	You may consider including lyrics and ways to present them to students, cultural information, grammar and/or vocabulary topics, and/or a related language learning activity. See Hispanet. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
<b>Create a game</b>	Create a game for teaching/learning a L2. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
<b>Write a paper on the value of learning a foreign language</b>	Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, double-spaced, 1" margin. Include a bibliography. Report using an activity sheet.	10/page Limit 5 pages
<b>Create a digital picture file</b>	You can find pictures/clipart on-line or use a digital camera to create your own. You may consider using pictures related to a certain topic or theme. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
<b>Conduct some research</b>	Plan your research with Dr. Storm to obtain approval before you start.	10/hr
<b>Surf the Internet and find useful websites</b>	You may want to save the addresses in a word document and/or create accompanying lesson plans. You could find cultural information, grammar activities, jokes, sayings, trivia, tongue twisters, proverbs, etc. See Hispanet. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
<b>Find, watch, and write-up a lesson plan for a movie/ T.V. program</b>	Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
<b>Find some commercials in the L2 and write lesson plans for them</b>	Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
<b>Create your own professional preparation activity</b>	Check with Dr. Storm for approval.	10/?
<b>Tutoring</b>	Offer to tutor a struggling Spanish student @UNI or a public school. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
<b>Bulletin board</b>	Create a bulletin board to display in your classroom. See Hispanet. Report using an activity sheet.	10/hr
<b>Point Total</b>	Total portfolio points earned for this course to be determined by the amount of activities done by the student and by instructor's grading of these activities.	

to the X theory of learning; task-based, service, problem-based, cooperative, or student-centered learning is important to include in my lesson planning; and, assessment should inform teaching practices.

Pre-service teachers may find it useful to keep a journal for teaching ideas where they can make note of teaching products, practices, and perspectives that they want or do not want to include in their professional development as a teacher. A portfolio with the same theoretical framework as the one for language students was developed for helping pre-service teachers approximate the community of practice of in-service teachers and appropriate their language and culture (Table 3, pp. 86-87). It aims to provide students with learning experiences in which they can confront and address many of the above mentioned questions. The activity sheet was also modified to work in tandem with the portfolio sheet (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Activity sheet for learning and improving approximation and appropriation of language teachers' language and culture.

ACTIVITY SHEET	
<b>Student:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Activity:</b>	
<b>Time spent:</b>	<b>Points earned:</b>
<b>Summary/Observations/Critiques/Ideas generated:</b>	
<b>Things I learned about or for teaching from this activity...</b>	

## Conclusion

In conclusion, approximating a community of practice through a variety of mediational tools helps both L2 students and pre-service language teachers. Both

are apprentices and, as such, should consider what their language learning and professional development goals are. They should take time to reflect on how they are approximating the community of practice of language learning and/or teaching and on how they engage in the language and culture using and acquiring meditational tools. They should also consider how they will continue to become the very best language students and teachers that they can be throughout their lives. The preparation of pre-service teachers coupled with continued teacher development will enrich, inspire, and transform the lives of our future language teachers and language students.

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## 6

### Can We Learn a Language Without Rules?

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#### Introduction

If an individual were to have fallen into a deep sleep for 100 years, much like Rip van Winkle, and awakened to the world as it is today, the changes in modes of transportation, space travel, and computer technology would evoke a sense of awe. The one constant that may appear unaffected by time is a place called school. Here one could find students sitting in a classroom, at desks, in a row, listening to a teacher who poses questions to be answered by students. Certainly this is not always the case, there are exceptions, but generally it still holds true. The same can be said about how we teach foreign languages, more specifically, how we teach grammar in the language classroom. Typically we see grammar taught by introducing rules using the first language (L1) through repetitive drills and worksheets. Is this the most effective way to teach language structures?

Certainly grammar constitutes an integral part of language instruction and with the development of communicative language teaching and standards-based instruction, the question of how best to teach grammar in the classroom is still heavily debated. The purpose of this article is to summarize the prevailing perspectives and theories of grammar teaching, provide an update on empirical studies, and present effective strategies and examples of grammar tasks that promote grammatical competence and support the second language (L2) learning process that is in concert with research, theory, and best practices.

### **The Great Debate**

The majority of research on grammar teaching falls into two camps: learning with or through rules (cognitive, deductive, conscious, or tutored processes and learning), or learning without rules (associative or implicit learning). When there is an absence of rules, the learner must rely on data-driven processes supported by memory. This approach leads to the formation of memories that can be easily accessed, allowing for faster performance, but without knowledge that can be generalized in new instances (Ortega, 2009). Without explicit rules, learning is bottom-up (data driven and memory driven) and does not lead to knowledge of a systematic rule. With rules, learning occurs by drawing on focused attention and conceptually driven processes supported by conscious attention, resulting in generalization with awareness (Ortega, 2009).

Implicit language teaching, or learning without rules, involves exposure to information. One learns through examples, usage, and illustrations without direct instruction about the language structure. Explicit language teaching poses the question: why make the learners guess the rules? Present the rule through clear and straightforward explanations and practice the rule until the students “internalize” the concept.

### **What We Know from Research**

What does research reveal about the effectiveness of implicit versus explicit grammar teaching? Empirical research in this arena is summarized and presented chronologically in order to provide the reader with an overview of findings that have influenced the teaching of grammar over the last twenty years.

Green and Hecht (1992) found that German university students who studied English were able to produce clear explanations for 85% of their grammatical errors, but the question of how well students were able to produce language was not addressed. Herron and Tomasello (1992) compared a guided induction approach to a traditional deductive approach. Results indicated that the guided inductive approach was superior to the deductive approach for the teaching of certain grammatical structures for beginning language learners. The researchers stated that “students learned grammatical structures better when they were given immediate feedback than they did when they were given a variety of examples without feedback” (p. 716). Alanen’s experimental study (1995) presented three groups of language learners with different forms of language input: visual enhancement (implicit presentation), explicit rule presentation, and a combination of both. Visual enhancement had a facilitative effect on learners’ recall and use of the target language. Students who did not receive any explicit form-focused instruction committed frequent omissions and over-generalizations in language use. Students who received explicit language instruction made frequent use of first language transfer. The study concluded that “the overall effect of the explicit rule-based instruction was clearly beneficial” (p. 294) and supported Schmidt’s (1990) prediction that less salient target language features may benefit from focusing learners’ attention on form (i.e., explicit learning).

Norris and Ortega's (2000) meta-analysis of 49 studies related to explicit instruction revealed substantial gains in the learning of target structures that were sustainable over time. DeKeyser (2003) reviewed studies that focused on the implicit/explicit L2 contradiction, either in a laboratory context or in a classroom setting. Findings were overwhelmingly in favor of explicit learning. Klapper and Rees (2003) drew on data from a four-year-long longitudinal study involving 57 undergraduate learners of German exposed to "focus-on-form" (inductive, meaning based) and "focus-on-forms" (deductive, out of context) instruction. The study revealed that learners who received focus-on-forms instruction, supported by meaningful interaction with L2 sources, made significantly greater progress than focus-on-form learners, whose program involved less consistent attention to linguistic features and had a more meaning-led syllabus. Erlam (2003) examined deductive instruction, which included rule presentation, metalinguistic information, and inductive instruction focusing on form with no explicit grammar instruction. Students in the deductive group showed consistent gains in acquiring presented grammar material, unlike those in the inductive group.

Kanda and Beglar (2004) conducted an experimental study to examine communicative grammar lessons based on the following teaching principles: teach form-function relations, compare related forms, promote learner autonomy, and provide opportunities for generative use. The study revealed that meaning-focused activities, which force deeper processing in a second language, resulted in better acquisition of the verb forms. It was concluded that tasks, in which form and communication are relatively balanced, "may be optimal when learners have a basic understanding of a form and their primary task is to refine and sharpen that understanding" (p.116). It was found that when learners are provided with overly communicative activities it will most often result in the "continued use of partially acquired forms because they are communicatively effective" (p.116). Learners may benefit from differing combinations of communicative and form-focused activities at different points in their development since morpho-syntactic knowledge develops gradually over time. There is a value in explicitly teaching morpho-syntactic forms followed by using them communicatively in creative autonomous tasks. Macaro and Masterman (2006) investigated how explicit grammar instruction affects grammatical knowledge of, and writing in, the L2. Students who experienced explicit grammar instruction were tested three times over five months. The research found that explicit grammar instruction results in gains of some grammatical aspects, but does not lead to gains in accuracy in translation and free composition. Tode (2007) studied the durability of explicit and implicit grammar instruction among 89 Japanese high school students of English. They were divided into three groups: explicit instruction, implicit instruction, and no special instruction on the verb "to be." The explicit participants were required to identify the structure in the sentences and translate them. Implicit grammar instruction focused on pronouncing the sentences with "to be" and writing the sentences down from memory. The third group of students did not receive any explanation of the verb "to be" and instead received instruction on the modal auxiliary "can." The study revealed that the explicit group of students performed

better and the author concluded that implicit instruction through memorization of examples alone was not sufficient. Explicit instruction of the verb “to be” is effective in the short term, but any conclusions as to whether or not the effect is long term cannot be made. The research suggests that in order to produce a long term effect of explicit instruction, students must engage in frequent production of the verb and receive assistance in noticing the differences between various forms.

Takimoto (2008) studied the effects of grammar teaching approaches (i.e., deductive and inductive) on the acquisition of grammatical structures used to perform complex requests. Sixty Japanese ESL intermediate level students were randomly assigned to either deductive instruction, inductive instruction with problem-solving tasks, or inductive instruction with structured input tasks. The study revealed that “inductive instruction is effective when combined with problem-solving tasks or structured input tasks” (p. 381). The study suggests that language instructors use tasks that emphasize meaning and include communication situations related to real-world activities. Azmi Adel and Abu (2008) studied the effects of deductive and inductive approaches of teaching the active and passive voice in English. Ninety-three university students from Jordan were randomly divided into two groups and received either inductive or deductive instruction. Students who received deductive instruction performed significantly better on the use of active and passive voice than those who received inductive instruction. Students who were taught deductively were able to immediately apply the rules, whereas students who were taught inductively required additional time to complete the questions. The study explains the effectiveness of the deductive approach by the fact that these students received more immediate feedback from the teacher. The study concluded that when grammar is taught for the sake of grammar, the deductive approach is more helpful than the inductive approach.

These research studies indicate that, over time, a more balanced approach is being advocated. Researchers (Robinson, 1997; Ellis, 2005; Williams, 1999) have argued that future debates about grammar learning be reformulated in terms of the interaction between low level associative learning that draws on data-driven processes supported by memory (inductive) and high-level cognitive learning that draws on conceptually-driven processes supported by conscious attention (deductive). This type of balanced approach supports an interaction between both types of processing.

Another approach, processing instruction, includes initial exposure to explicit instruction as well as a combination of a series of input processing activities. These activities consist of tasks that encourage comprehension of the target structure rather than its production (Ellis, 1995, 2006; VanPatten, 1993, 2002). These activities help learners to create form-meaning connections through structured input (Lee & VanPatten, 1995). VanPatten (2002) argues that since the aim of this approach is “to assist the learner in making form-meaning connections during input processing, it is more appropriate to view it as a type of focus on form” (p. 764). Extensive research shows a favorable effect for processing instruction (Cadierno, 1995; VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993; VanPatten & Oikennon, 1996).

### **Which Approach Should I Use? Things to Consider**

According to Ellis (2006) different variables influence a teacher's decision concerning which approach to grammar instruction to use, such as the specific structure of the target language grammar, or a learner's aptitude for grammatical analysis. Ellis (2006) states that "simple rules may best be taught deductively, while more complex rules may best be taught inductively" (p. 98). He further notes that learners who are skilled in grammatical analysis perform better when instruction is inductive, and those less skilled perform better when instruction is deductive. Ellis (2006) argues that "in order for grammar instruction to be effective, it needs to take into account how learners develop their interlanguages" (p. 86).

Ellis (2006) stresses the importance of emphasizing "the teaching of grammar in the early stages of L2 acquisition" (p. 90). He states that it is optimal to emphasize meaning-focused instruction initially and introduce grammar teaching later, when the learner has already begun to form his/her interlanguage that is, the individual linguistic system of a language learner that does not yet approximate that of a native speaker. Ellis (2006) supports the idea that grammar teaching needs to be designed in terms of both implicit and explicit approaches.

Nunan (1998) posits that the linear model of language acquisition, which implies that learners acquire one L2 item at a time "in a sequential step-by-step fashion" (p. 101), is not consistent with what is observed in the language acquisition process. He compares the linear model of language acquisition to building a wall, which appears as a result of "one linguistic brick at a time" (p. 101). Learners, though, do not acquire language in a step-by-step linear model. Various language elements interact and are affected by other elements. At different times during the learning process a learner's mastery of a specific grammar aspect either increases or decreases. Therefore, Nunan argues for an organic approach that compares foreign language learning to growing a garden, implying that learners do not learn one thing at a time, but numerous things simultaneously. Nunan (1998) argues that a linear traditional approach does not prepare learners to use their grammar knowledge communicatively. He suggests teaching grammar in a range of different authentic contexts and sees drilling only as a first step towards eventual mastery. The author emphasizes the importance of engaging students in tasks that allow for recycling of information to make transparent links between form, meaning, and use. Opportunities for structuring the language through inductive learning experiences and exploration of grammar in context should be provided along with diverse linguistic learning environments. A balance between explicit exercises and those that allow for exploring the use of grammar will be the most effective approach to teaching language grammar.

### **One at a Time, or All at Once?**

Ellis (2006) distinguishes between intensive and extensive grammar instruction. Should the teacher address a single grammatical feature per lesson or include multiple grammatical features? Extensive grammar teaching "refers to instruction concerning a whole range of structures within a short period of

time (e.g., a lesson) so that each structure receives only minimal attention in any one lesson” (p. 93). It allows students to attend to large numbers of grammatical structures and many of the structures are addressed repeatedly over a period of time. It is individualized and allows the teacher to make contextual analysis and respond to each learner’s errors. It does not attend to those structures that learners do not attempt to use and does not provide in-depth practice that some structures may require. Intensive grammar instruction “refers to instruction over a sustained period of time (i.e., a lesson, or a series of lessons) concerning a single grammatical structure or a pair of contrasted structures (e.g., English past continuous vs. past simple)” (p. 93).

Harley (1989) revealed that English learners of French did not manage to acquire the distinction between the preterite and imperfect past tenses after hours of exposure in an immersion program (i.e., extensive instruction), but were able to improve their accuracy in using these two tenses after intensive instruction. However, intensive instruction is time consuming and as such limits the number of structures that can be addressed. Spada and Lightbown (1999) note that intensive grammar instruction helps students to progress through the sequence of stages involved in the acquisition of the target structures even when learners are not ready to learn them. Intensive instruction helps learners to use structures they have already partially acquired (White, Spada, Lightbown, & Ranta, 1991).

### **Variables that Influence Grammar Teaching**

#### *Age*

Celce-Murcia (1991) identified several learner and instructional variables that may determine the most appropriate approach to grammar teaching. Age was identified as an important learner variable in helping teachers to decide the extent to which they should focus on form. Young children need little explicit grammar instruction, whereas adolescents benefit from some explicit focus on form. Language proficiency and learner background knowledge were identified as key learner variables. Beginning learners tend to approach grammar holistically or implicitly, whereas intermediate or advanced level learners need instruction focused on form. Zhonggang Gao (2001) states that adults “comprehend the rules of grammar with the knowledge from either their first language or... their worldly knowledge” (p. 332). By offering an explicit type of instruction to adults, a teacher compensates for the lack of target language intuition in comparison to young children. On the contrary, children acquire a new language when they are provided with a rich cultural and linguistic target environment and do not require explicit grammar instruction. Zhonggang Gao (2001) notes that grammar is an aid to effective communication and “can be taught in isolated situations or in real situational contexts” (p. 323). The author posits that there is no proven benefit for correcting a child’s grammar, while adults need a teacher’s guidance in order to acquire grammar rules.

*Educational Objective*

When students are preliterate with little formal education, it is not very productive to focus on form extensively, however literate and well-educated learners may become frustrated when they are not given an opportunity to learn language structures explicitly. Formal accuracy is of little value when the learner's goal is survival communication, but when "the learner wants to function as an academic... a high degree of formal accuracy is essential" (p. 464). Celce-Murcia (1991) argued that the need to focus on form changes according to the educational objective. When receptive skills such as listening or reading are to be taught, it is "irrelevant to emphasize grammar since these receptive skills require competence primarily in the areas of word recognition and semantic processing" (p. 464). Formal accuracy becomes important when the teacher is focusing on productive skills such as speaking and writing.

*Learner Styles*

Celce-Murcia (1991) identified two types of learners: analytic and holistic. Learners with an analytic style learn best by formulating and testing rules, whereas, holistic style learners learn best by "experiencing, gathering and restructuring... but doing little or no analysis" (p. 463). A learner's cognitive style should be taken into account while teaching grammar (Abraham, 1985). Abraham (1985) conducted a study with ESL students who were either field-dependent or field-independent learners. Field-dependent learners focus on the big picture, rather than its parts, while learning and processing information. Their perceptions are influenced by the environment and are affected by an instructor's interaction and communicative style. Field dependent learners prefer to work collaboratively. Field-independent learners tend to focus on the parts rather than the whole picture while processing information. Their perceptions are not influenced by the environment and they prefer to work independently, taking a more impersonal approach to learning. According to Abraham's study (1985) field-independent learners performed better when they were exposed to deductive instruction, while field-dependent learners performed better with an inductive approach.

Midford and Kirsher (2005) explored the relationship between learning styles and performance by older and young adults and how a combination of different conditions influenced explicit and implicit learning. It was found that young adults performed better overall than older adults, however the older adults were less disadvantaged when the grammatical material was complex. Both young and older adults used implicit learning when rules were unavailable, or difficult to discern, and explicit strategies when rules were available. Scheffler (2008) claims that adult learners acquire information best when they are engaged in problem-solving activities by being provided with explicit rules about the target language, and then having opportunities for automatizing those rules.

*Topic Familiarity and Textual Enhancements*

Lee (2007) studied the effects of textual enhancement and topic familiarity on reading comprehension and learning of the passive form. In a study targeting



Korean EFL high school students, textual enhancement resulted in better performance on form correction tasks and aided students in attending to the target grammar. Students who were presented with enhanced texts recalled significantly less than students who were given baseline texts. This may be due to the fact that students may be distracted by the visual elements while exposed to enhanced texts. The study suggested that topic familiarity facilitated learners' focus on meaning during comprehension, whereas textual enhancement might have been involved in both comprehension and acquisition components.

#### *Learner Choice*

Cullen (2008) identified elements of grammar that should be incorporated into the design of grammar production activities: learner choice, lexis to grammar, and comparing texts and noticing gaps. The author notes that learners "must have a degree of choice over the grammatical structures they use, and deploy them as effectively as they can to match specific contexts and meet specific communicative goals" (p. 223). Grammar learning, thus, should have a process, rather than product oriented approach. Lexis to grammar implies that learners use their grammar knowledge to express a range of meanings that "the words alone could not convey" (p. 224). Comparing texts and noticing gaps in grammar teaching implies that the learner needs to focus on grammatical forms that "arise from their communicative needs as a result of noticing gaps in their own use of grammar" (p. 224). Cullen's research concluded that the most effective strategy to adopt for grammar teaching is to balance the two approaches: process-oriented and product-oriented.

#### *Cultural and Cross-Cultural Experiences*

Chen (2008) investigated the preferences of Chinese EFL students and native English speakers concerning inductive and deductive approaches. It was found that as students' L2 levels increase, their preferences for inductive types of instruction decreases. The author suggests that the degree of preference for either inductive or deductive instruction corresponds with variation of cultural experience and cross-cultural awareness of students. Therefore, language learning, cross-cultural understanding, and social-cognitive development interact with each other throughout the entire learning process.

#### *Teacher Led versus Peer Learning*

Toth (2008) compared two types of task-based grammar instruction: whole-class teacher-led discourse versus small-group learner-led discourse. The study of beginning Spanish students revealed that teacher-coordinated interactions in the teacher-led discourse group yielded stronger learning outcomes. It was mentioned, though, that observed benefits of teacher-led discourse greatly depended on a variety of individual and contextual factors, such as instructor's ability to effectively manage classroom interactions and a positive class rapport.

These studies provide empirical evidence that support success in learning grammar and serve as excellent guidelines for the development and effective



integration of grammar in the language classroom. The following grammar activities are designed to illustrate the principles learned from the research and serve as exemplars of grammar activities that represent best practice.

### Grammar Activities for the Language Classroom

Example 1: Visually Systematizing Grammar Rules (Inductive Approach).

<i>Er</i>	<i>geht</i>		<i>samstags</i>	<i>ins Kino</i>
<i>Er</i>	<i>spielt</i>		<i>am Montag</i>	<i>Tennis</i>
<i>Am Donnerstag</i>	<i>hat</i>	<i>er</i>	<i>Musikunterricht</i>	
<i>Dienstags</i>	<i>geht</i>	<i>er</i>	<i>zu seiner Oma</i>	

He goes to the movies on Saturdays.

He plays tennis on Monday.

On Thursday he has music lessons.

Tuesdays he goes to his grandmother.

Have students identify the subject by drawing a circle around the subject of each sentence. Students then draw a square around the verb in each sentence. Once students have completed this task, have them formulate a rule (in pairs) that they discover from these four sentences. This exercise makes grammar rules conscious by having students use symbols to identify grammar structures. Students are also put into the role of active learner and are engaged in making sense from structure, negotiating with a peer, and ultimately constructing a rule that they observed and created. This instills confidence in their abilities, provides ownership, and motivates students.

### Example 2: Drill for Skill

Students are presented with a picture of a student examining his new dorm room making the following observations:

*Il y a une lampe, mais pas d'électricité.* (There is a lamp, but no electricity.)

*Il y a un lavabo, mais pas d'eau chaude.* (There is a sink, but no hot water.)

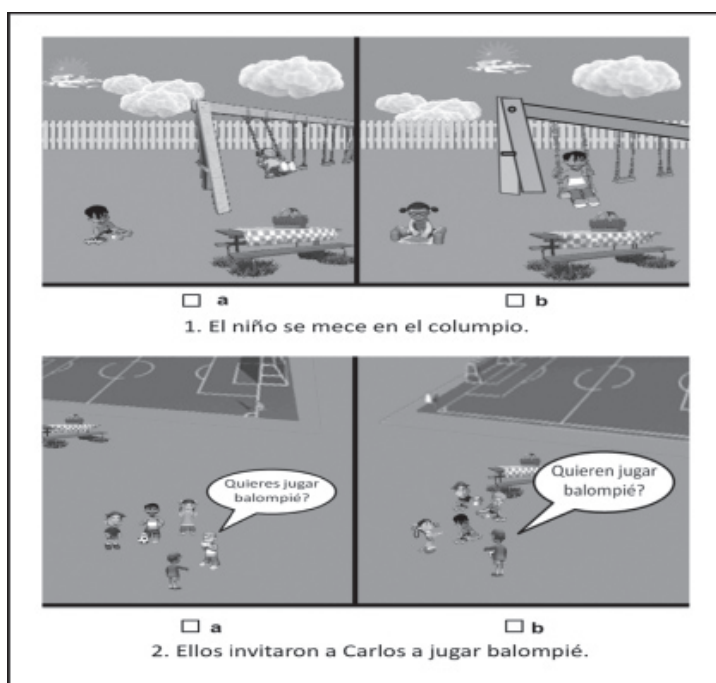
*Il y a une raquette, mais pas de balle.* (There is a racquet, but no ball.)

Students are asked to complete similar sentences about the room from another illustration. This forces students to attend to the structures in the previous model and write appropriate responses in another context. This type of activity engages learners in the learning process without the boredom of repetitive drills. They are learning structures in a new context that provides the necessary disequilibrium that promotes learning.

## Example 3: Sentence Interpretation Task

Teachers provide structured input that includes activities that are affective in nature, for example, activities that ask for an opinion, a personal response, or access the students' background knowledge and personal experiences. The teacher begins with a concrete statement tied to a picture to ascertain the truth value of a sentence. The students are asked which of the two sentences best describes the picture. The picture creates an immediate reference and there is only one right and wrong answer. These activities allow the teacher to discern if students focused on the actual grammatical meaning of the message before being led into affective learning activities.

**Figure 1.** Processing Instruction



The first picture in Figure 1 shows a girl sitting on a swing and the second picture shows a boy sitting on the swing. The statement "*El niño se mece en el columpio*" [The boy swings on the swing], forces the learner to attend to the gender of the child, in this case a male, thereby prompting the learner to attend to grammar while simultaneously focusing meaning. The second set of pictures depicts children near the soccer field. In the first picture Carlos' friends invite him to play soccer. In the second, Carlos invites his friends to play soccer. The statement "*Ellos invitaron a Carlos a jugar balompié*" [They invite Carlos to play soccer], forces the learner to focus on the plural form of the verb in order to

identify the picture that best represents the statement. The learner must focus on both the grammar and meaning as depicted in the visual representation.

Example 4: Input Processing Instruction

- |                    |             |
|--------------------|-------------|
| 1. a. Mr. Rogers   | Sarah Palin |
| b. agree           | disagree    |
| 2. a. Katie Couric | Jay Leno    |
| b. agree           | disagree    |

Students are presented with the statements above and listen to sentences that describe the individuals in these statements. Students access background knowledge about these individuals, thereby forming an opinion, and then must determine the correct response and indicate whether they agree or disagree with this statement.

1. *Es dinámico*
2. *Es cómica*

The student sees *dinámico* and immediately thinks the correct response must be Sarah Palin. However, upon closer examination of the grammatical structure, the only correct response must be Mr. Rogers based on the masculine “o” ending. The student identifies the correct response (Mr. Rogers) and then checks whether s/he agrees with the statement, thereby forcing an opinion on the part of the student. This involves deeper processing and evokes an emotional response that involves the learner in the learning process.

Example 5: Focus on Form

An example of a cognitive approach that directs learners’ attention to form can be found in the following:

Carolina **purchased** a book in the bookstore.

- (a) last Monday
- (b) tomorrow
- (c) now

The student must attend to the morphological ending of the verb in order to determine that the response has to be something that happened in the past tense, thereby eliminating responses b and c. Again, the student is involved in focusing on grammar while attending to meaning and is actively engaged in the learning process.

Example 6: Complex Grammar Structures

For more complex grammar structures, implicit instruction can occur through a variety of learner centered activities. For example, students are presented with a dialogue and must fill in the correct form of *kennen* (to be acquainted with), *können* (to be able to, can), *wissen* (to have knowledge about). These three words in the German language are difficult to distinguish for language learners and thus may require a more explicit and structured approach.

1. Eric: Inka, \_\_\_\_\_ du wo die Bushaltestelle ist? Wir suchen sie seit 20 Minuten. Schau dort! Es ist der Oskar! \_\_\_\_\_ du ihn?
2. Inka: Ist er ein Freund von dir? Vielleicht \_\_\_\_\_ er wo die Haltestelle ist oder vielleicht hat er einen Stadtplan und \_\_\_\_\_ uns sagen wie wir dahin kommen.

Eric: Inka, do you know where the bus stop is? We have been looking for the last 20 minutes. Oh look! There is Oscar. Do you know him?

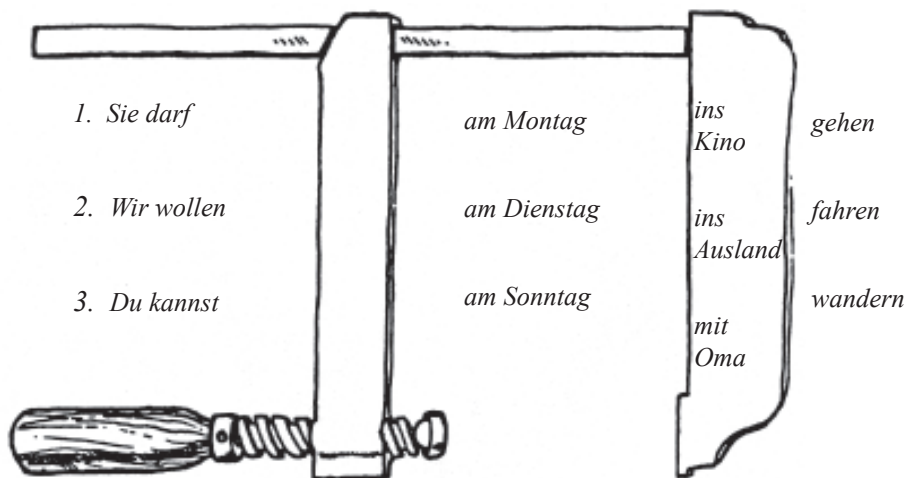
Inka: Is he a friend of yours? Maybe he knows where the bus stop is, or perhaps he has a city map and can tell us how to get there.

According to the research more complex grammar structures should be taught inductively, allowing the student to engage in the process of decoding meaning. Negotiating a response with a peer would enhance this activity and promote cognitive engagement.

#### Example 7: Visualization Strategies to Teach Grammatical Structures

Combining explicit instruction with visualization makes the structural relationship more concrete allowing the learner to physically and visually see the grammatical structures and how they function. For example, when teaching word order related to modals in German, one can use a picture of a clamp or a vise to concretely illustrate how the verbs function in the sentence.

**Figure 2.** Visualization Strategy to Teach Grammar (Source: Adapted from Neuner, 1983)



*Sie darf am Montag ins Kino gehen.* She may go to the movies on Monday.

*Wir wollen am Dienstag ins Ausland fahren.* We want to go out of the country on Tuesday.

*Du kannst Sonntag mit Oma fahren.* You can drive with grandma on Sunday.

## Example 8: Information Gap Activity and Kinesthetic Learning

In order to facilitate students' learning of prepositions, a teacher may involve students in an information-gap activity. Working in pairs, Student A is given an envelope containing pictures of furniture and a piece of paper representing a room in the house. Student B is given a picture of a furnished room. Student B must describe to Student A where s/he must place the furniture. In German this demands the use of accusative prepositions. Once Student A has placed all the furniture in the room, he must describe to Student B where each piece of furniture is located. This requires the use of dative prepositions as the speaker is describing where each item is located. Together the students write a paragraph describing the room. The role of the teacher is to facilitate and provide feedback as needed. In addition the teacher listens actively as students negotiate the activities in order to provide formative assessment. The teacher can also make use of "teachable moments in grammar" by taking two to three minutes to focus on a grammatical structure that is particularly challenging to students based on her classroom observations.

## Example 9: Cooperative Learning Tasks

Students are divided into four home groups and are asked to prepare a short presentation constructing a visual, or poster, about Shakira, a pop singer from Columbia. Students select a leader, a motivator, a time-keeper, and a recorder and each member of the group assumes responsibility for a certain part of the information: (a) Shakira's early years; (b) Shakira's professional rise to international stardom; (c) Shakira's music, awards, and future plans; and (d) Shakira's philanthropy and humanitarian efforts. Each member of the group joins an expert group (one student from each group who has selected this topic) where there are texts, videos, and resources designed to provide information on the topic. The members take notes on their findings in order to share this information with their home group. Students return to their home groups, share what they learned, and prepare a visual depicting the story of Shakira. They present their results to the entire class. This jig-saw activity immerses students in Spanish as they receive written L2 input via texts, videos, and other resources, and record a summary of the information learned in their expert groups in order to retell the information to their home group peers. All modes of communication (interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational) are used and students are actively involved in the information gleaned from texts and resources while having to produce output by sharing findings with peers and presenting to the entire class. This activity also forces the use of past, present, and future tenses as students describe Shakira's childhood, rise to fame, and future plans.

## Example 10: Mnemonic Devices

Games, songs, poems, and verses serve as excellent contexts for task-based communicative activities for teaching grammar. Saricoban and Metin (2000) mentioned that grammar games allow students to extensively practice and internalize grammar structures and absorb the language subconsciously. Poems, verses, and games include repetition, which allows the language to become rooted

in memory. Games are highly motivating and allow meaningful use of language in context. Ersoz (2000) argues that movement is an important element of grammar games as it activates student's mental capacities and stimulates neural networks, therefore promoting retention of information. TPR games may be used to teach some grammar items and structures such as prepositions. For example, the teacher can use both hands to illustrate prepositions, such as above, in front of, behind, and between as students imitate the movement.

A distinct advantage of games is the fact that all students are involved simultaneously and nobody is left out. A wealth of interactive grammar games, poems, and rhymes may be found at the following websites:

<http://www.spanishclassonline.com/games/hangman/affirmneg.htm>  
(hangman)

[http://www.spanish.cl/Grammar/Games/Articulos\\_Definidos\\_Indefinidos.htm](http://www.spanish.cl/Grammar/Games/Articulos_Definidos_Indefinidos.htm) (series of grammar activities)

<http://faculty.buffalostate.edu/beaverjf/internet/grammar.htm> (interactive grammar games)

<http://www.kimskorner4teachertalk.com/grammar/menu.html> (ideas and activities for teaching grammar)

[http://www.glencoe.com/sec/teachingtoday/subject/to\\_teach.phtml](http://www.glencoe.com/sec/teachingtoday/subject/to_teach.phtml) (variety of grammar tasks and ideas)

#### Example 11: Question Words

To promote the mastery of questions words, the teacher places an index card folded in half on six desks; each card contains one of the following question words: Who? What? Why? When? Where? How? The teacher sets the timer for five minutes and teams of four students sit at each table. The teacher provides a topic and the groups have five minutes to come up with as many questions as possible related to the topic. When the timer rings, the groups move to the next table. The winner is the group with the most correct responses. No books or dictionaries may be used. This allows for negotiation among the learners (peer learning), focuses on one grammar structure, and is in the form of a motivating game combining competition with collaboration. A variety of grammar points may be substituted for the question words.

#### Example 12: Storytelling using Props and Visuals

When teaching either/or prepositions in German, a picture of a room containing furniture and a hole in a wall, where a mouse is living, is distributed to students. The teacher tells the following story in the L2 as students listen to the narrative. The teacher elicits oral responses that require students to demonstrate understanding of form while attending to meaning. The focus here is on the difference between *wo* (location, where) and *wohin* (to where, movement).

*Die Maus wohnt in der Wand im Wohnzimmer. Sie hat Hunger und sieht ein Stück Käse auf dem Tisch im Wohnzimmer. Sie hat einen Bärenhunger und will den Käse essen ABER es gibt eine große, gemeine*

*Katze im Haus und die möchte die Maus gerne fressen. Die Maus geht sehr langsam in \_\_\_\_\_ Zimmer, springt auf \_\_\_\_\_ Stuhl, dann auf d\_\_\_\_\_ Tisch und beginnt den Käse zu essen. Plötzlich sieht die Katze die Maus und springt auf d\_\_\_\_\_ Stuhl, dann auf d\_\_\_\_\_ Tisch und will die Maus fressen. Die Maus erschreckt, springt auf d\_\_\_\_\_ Fußboden und rennt in d\_\_\_\_\_ Loch zurück. In dem Loch in d\_\_\_\_\_ Wand atmet sie tief ein und sagt laut: "Ich bin wieder in mein \_\_\_\_\_ gemütlichen Haus." Aber in ein paar Stunden hat sie wieder Hunger, schleicht in d\_\_\_\_\_ Zimmer und springt auf d\_\_\_\_\_ Tisch und frisst ein grosses Stück Käse. Plötzlich sieht sie die Katze, rennt davon, aber leider ist die Katze schneller und fängt die Maus. Wo ist die Maus? In d\_\_\_\_\_ Katze! Das Ende.*

The mouse lives in the wall in the living room. She is hungry and sees a piece of cheese on the table in the living room. She is as hungry as a bear and wants to eat the cheese BUT a large, mean cat lives in this house and would love to eat the mouse. The mouse slowly goes into the room, jumps on the chair, then on the table, and begins to eat the cheese. Suddenly, the mouse sees the cat and jumps on the chair, then on the table and wants to eat the mouse. The mouse is shocked, jumps on the floor and runs back into the hole. Once in the hole, the mouse takes a deep breath and says loudly "I am back in my comfortable house." But in a few hours she is hungry again, she sneaks into the room, jumps on the table and eats a big piece of cheese. Suddenly she sees the cat, runs away, but unfortunately the cat is faster and catches the mouse. Where is the mouse? In the cat. The end.

## Conclusion

There are many factors to consider when deciding how to teach grammar in the language classroom such as age, learner styles, educational objectives, cultural background, topic familiarity, and visual enhancements. Researchers have provided valuable direction for how and when to maximize student achievement in the language classroom that can assist practicing teachers in making informed decisions as to the best approach(es) for their students. The activities presented in this chapter represent a variety of research-based approaches to teaching grammar that involve students actively in the learning process. By integrating these strategies into the language classroom, a more balanced and effective approach to grammar teaching will emerge that is in concert with prevailing research based language teaching theory and approaches.

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# 7

## **French Tunes 101: A Primer for Staying Abreast of Current Trends in French Music and Exploiting Them for Classroom Use**

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**I**n this article, we address the need for integrating contemporary music and musicals into the high school and college French curriculum as a means of teaching culture, literature, and history and conveying ideas about modern French and francophone values. Excerpts and sample lessons are provided as concrete starting points for discussions on teaching grammar, phonetics, history, writing, ethics, and comparative culture. The following pages provide ideas for locating popular songs and lyrics as well as models for creating grammatical, phonetic, and vocabulary-building exercises based on the songs and an interdisciplinary unit centered on the recent musical *Le Roi Soleil*.

While French teachers in the United States often teach readily available songs and lyrics from classic piano bar crooners, such as Piaf, Trenet, or Brassens, not to mention beloved stand-bys like Joe Dassin and his renowned “*Aux Champs-Élysées*,” how many have the time, the will, or the interest to research contemporary trends in French music? More than one would think, according to a recent survey of 33 Ohio French teachers (see Appendix A) of whom 87% responded that integrating contemporary French music into their high school or college French classes was a priority, albeit challenging given copyright restrictions and preparation time involved. While lamenting the difficulty of keeping up with popular French music, respondents gave a plethora of convincing reasons for taking the time to add modern music to the curriculum, such as “cultural awareness,” “the use of art in the curriculum,” “grammar and

vocabulary instruction,” “pronunciation instruction,” “listening comprehension,” “literary awareness,” “exposure to authentic media,” and “making the educational experience joyful and interesting.”

Surveyed teachers overwhelmingly agreed that including contemporary popular music in the French curriculum allows them to focus on proficiency training within the framework of the national standards for foreign language education: “Music helps me meet the standards and address all of the Five Cs (communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, communities) in a natural, unforced way. Students don’t even know how much they’re learning.” Indeed, incorporating age-appropriate music into the foreign language curriculum allows teachers to target clusters of standards almost spontaneously. Students “understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics (Standard 1.2)” simply by listening to target language songs, and reading and deciphering the lyrics. While many surveyed teachers use music as entertainment or as a reward, some develop meaningful or cooperative activities that encourage students to communicate about a subject that stimulates their interest: “I use the songs for discussion openers, grammar, pronunciation, comprehension, and mini-presentations (Standards 1.1, 1.3).” Another teacher has her students keep music notebooks to express opinions and analyze texts (Standard 1.1). Still another uses “a different song each week that relates to the subject matter (history, art, francophone world, etc.) they are studying (Standard 3.1).”

Contemporary music teaches culture in an engaging context; as a result students “demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied (Standard 2.2).” While classic art, dance, gastronomy, and literature seem to define traditional French culture, the French diaspora produces a variety of popular, trend setting music that holds great appeal for American adolescents and twenty-somethings. Modern music challenges stereotypes of what it means to be French and provides a means of conveying ideas about authentic modern French and francophone values, thereby bridging a cultural divide that artificially separates Americans and Europeans and giving American students a sense of global connectedness. When asked why she includes contemporary French music in her daily lesson plans, one teacher answers, “Modern music is important because kids are interested in it. It’s relevant to them and shows [students] that French culture is not just Louis XIV and music is not just Piaf. It helps them to develop an appreciation of other cultures as well.” Her words are echoed by another teacher who states, “Contemporary popular music keeps students connected to a living culture. It helps keep things relevant for them. It reflects modern France — its people, its culture, its issues.”

Since students enjoy learning about what their young francophone counterparts are listening to, they respond enthusiastically to assignments in which they can research and present findings on particular singers and genres. Simple strategies based on music tend to produce excellent results; according to one polled teacher, “I ask my students to choose a French or francophone singer and to compose a short biographical and photographic essay on him or her, which they then present to the class.” Students in another class “discuss *la Fête de la musique*, which is

a large summer event celebrated all over France. I show them clips so they can see what it's like, and we compare it to music festivals in the US. [Students are] always surprised that there is good rap and techno music in France. (Standards 1.2, 2.2, 4.2)."

Many teachers use current music to develop critical thinking skills: "Music can be a jumping off point for discussions about current events, everyday life, political issues, and culture in France and Francophone countries today and throughout history." Given that students' ingrained cultural or national perspective tends to taint their individual perceptions of foreign civilizations and practices, the study of popular music naturally invites comparisons to American versions of the same genres. "Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own (Standard 4.2)." For example, when studying French rap, students are naturally inclined to notice thematic and stylistic similarities and differences with the more familiar American variety. French language teachers typically present rap songs to analyze the differences between French and American suburbs, to compare ghettos and cities, and to evaluate the state of race relations and immigration issues in France and the US. While some global issues raised in the music may be familiar to our students, French rap often tackles political and ethical concerns largely unfamiliar to American youth.

Ever since 1981, when Stephen Krashen published *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, in which he identified emotional obstacles such as anxiety or boredom, which he called the "affective filter," as among the most serious impediments to language learning, language instructors using a communicative approach have been searching for ways to de-stress L2 students thereby allowing for maximum comprehension and language output. Using contemporary French music in the classroom is a way of connecting to the students' world by presenting them with familiar beats and styles that make them feel a healthy combination of comfort and curiosity. In the words of one poll respondent, "If the students are requesting it, they are engaged in it! Music reaches out to them and supercedes second language barriers."

As anyone who regularly attends language pedagogy conferences can attest, sessions on popular music often draw standing-room-only crowds, during which presenters share musical discoveries and discuss music's importance as realia in the L2 classroom. The 2008 American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Conference boasted no fewer than nine sessions on music and foreign language pedagogy, including the following catchy titles: "Beyond the Lyrics: Music in the Digital World," "Language Rock Stars – Music for the French and Spanish Classroom," "Music as a Tool for Learning," and "Teaching Austria: Sound of Music, Sissi, Mozart, Mountains - and?"

Despite the overwhelming consensus among French language teachers concerning the necessity of introducing students to modern French language music, the problem remains that primary resources are quickly outdated and articles published on music trends often appear after the artists have peaked in popularity. For this reason, this article aims to offer tools for staying abreast

of current popular French music and locating primary or secondary materials appropriate for classroom use. In addition, models and methods will be provided for efficient development of worksheets and other activities based on current popular songs. Our approach is eclectic given that students benefit from exposure to a wide variety of musical styles and genres and have very diverse and well-defined musical tastes. To appeal to a wide audience, our examples include popular French and francophone rock, rap, slam, country, pop, and rock-opera musicals.

When asked how they stay abreast of current trends and obtained music, Ohio French teachers had various strategies ranging from asking friends and exchange students, to attending workshops, listening to French radio online ([chanteFrance.com](http://chanteFrance.com)), or listening to Sirius Canada. Favorite music websites include [yahoo.fr/musique](http://yahoo.fr/musique), [TF1.fr](http://TF1.fr), and the TV5 pedagogical site. In addition, teachers can use keyword searches such as “Top 40 France” to locate current French hits. Music award shows offer another path to foreign music discovery. The “NRJ Music Awards” take place annually in January, and the “Victoires de la musique” every February. While it’s interesting to see who wins in the categories of international artist or album or group, French language music has its own category (i.e. “*Album français de l’année*”).

To determine whether songs are appropriate, catchy, or useful, teachers can listen to songs and watch music videos on the artist’s website, music awards show websites, [youtube.com](http://youtube.com), [songza.com](http://songza.com), [dailymotion.com](http://dailymotion.com), and countless other sites. Since copyright laws have been enforced, lyrics are more difficult to find than they were a few years ago, so new search methods are required. Usually, a simple search involving typing in the song title and the artist’s name, followed by “lyrics” or “*paroles*” will produce results. If this fails, listening to the song and typing a few lines into a Google search will sometimes produce more elusive texts. A word of caution, the lyrics are posted by listeners who often use faulty grammar, punctuation, and spelling, so editing may be necessary. Another factor to keep in mind is that not all students will respond positively to the same types of music, so alternating genres will keep students focused and interested. It’s important to be inclusive, making sure that you provide a full spectrum of choices.

Once teachers have chosen the music to use in class, the question becomes how to transform songs into efficient and stimulating pedagogical materials. One technique is to look at each song for salient grammatical, phonetic, or vocabulary patterns that reflect students’ current proficiency level and target lesson material. For instance, for students studying the present tense, the choices are endless. The popular Christophe Maé song “*C’est ma terre*” [This is my land] (2008) is one of many that lends itself well to a simple fill-in-the-blank type of exercise such as the following, with infinitives optionally provided:

On \_\_\_\_\_ (*oublier*) un peu facilement  
 D’où l’on \_\_\_\_\_ (*venir*), d’où l’on \_\_\_\_\_ (*partir*)  
 Ça nous \_\_\_\_\_ (*arranger*) de perdre  
 De temps en temps la mémoire.

[You forget a little too easily  
 Where you come from, where you begin

It's convenient for us  
To lose our memory from time to time.]

Teachers can also ask students to change the tense of verbs in songs (from present to past or future) for more work on tenses. A notorious grammatical sticking point for many students is the distinction between the two principal past tenses. In French, there is a wealth of excellent songs that tell stories in the past alternating between the *passé composé* and the *imparfait* past tenses. In Sheryfa Luna's hit "*Il avait les mots*" [He knew just what to say] (2008), a young girl tells about her naïveté and sudden awakening during an unfortunate romance with an older, married man:

*Il était vraiment plus âgé que moi  
Je suis tout bêtement tombée dans ses bras  
Par lui, j'ai découvert ce que je ne connaissais pas  
Il semblait sincère, je l'aimais pour ça.*

[He was a lot older than me  
I stupidly fell into his arms  
He taught me things I didn't know  
He seemed sincere, I loved him for that.]

I ask students to circle verbs in the *passé composé* and to underline verbs in the *imparfait*. Afterwards, I ask students to explain why each tense was chosen and to note when the past participle agrees with the subject or the preceding direct object. Given the moving, intriguing, and very authentic content and language in the song and video, students relate to the song and activity on many levels, and ask both grammatical and thematic questions with genuine curiosity.

Other types of grammar lessons that can come to life through modern music include exercises on gender, where students listen to the song and write out the article they hear (*le, la, les, un, une, des*) or where students predict gender, then listen to the song for masculine or feminine articles that confirm or deny their predictions. Along these lines, students can work on agreement of subjects and adjectives, identifying adverbs, or work with direct and indirect object pronouns, possessive adjectives, and many more structures.

Those who frequently use music in their foreign language classes generally agree that there is no better way for students to practice their target language listening skills and to better understand phonetics than by listening to and working with music that reflects modern linguistic reality. Given that French is not always pronounced the way it is written, I often use songs in the very early days of elementary French to point out silent word endings, nasal vowels, vowel distinctions, liaison, and intonation. A song from the Québécois band Karkwa "*Oublie pas*" [Don't forget] (2009) gets students thinking about when the letters "s" and "t" are pronounced; I ask them to circle all [s] sounds and underline all [t] sounds, then to listen to the song to confirm their choices:

*Comme nos vies vacillent entre les tempêtes,  
Pense pas aux attentes, pas plus qu'aux malheurs.*



*Fais sourire les filles, fais tourner les têtes.  
 Tout ce que tu tentes, mais n'oublie pas mon cœur.*

[As our lives sway between storms  
 Don't worry about expectations or misfortune  
 Make the girls smile, make heads turn.  
 Do what you want, but don't forget my heart.]

Modern music exposes students to real-life vocabulary that applies to contemporary French and francophone life; they learn slang, develop an ear for authentic current usage, and become skilled at reproducing oral syntactical patterns such as the dropping of “ne” in negative structures. Vocabulary building exercises can focus on guessing meaning from context and identifying cognates. Charlotte Gainsbourg and Étienne Daho recorded a hit song in 2008 entitled “If” in which many of the words are easily recognizable cognates (*abusif, compulsif, décoratif, sédatif, captif, approximatif, intrusif*). The song is so accessible that I use it on the first day of my elementary class, and manage to have a reasonable discussion about its meaning entirely in the target language.

Given that songs often tell stories, it is not hard to find themes that tie in with the day's lesson. Prior to listening to Jean LeLoup's cutting edge rock song “*La Chambre*” [The bedroom] (2009), I ask students to first imagine the perfect studio apartment and then the worst possible room they can imagine. After they listen to the song, I ask them to draw the room represented in the song:

*Je possède un lit étroit  
 Et une fenêtre en bois  
 Dans ma chambre où il fait froid.  
 La fenêtre donne sur un mur  
 En haut ce n'est pas le ciel  
 En bas ce n'est pas la cour  
 Au loin ce n'est pas la mer...*

[I own a narrow bed  
 And a window with a wooden frame  
 In my bedroom where it's cold.  
 The window looks out onto a wall  
 Above, you can't see the sky  
 Below, you can't see the courtyard  
 Far off, you can't see the sea...]

Because of the variety of genres encompassed in contemporary music, from poetry to satire to short stories, contemporary music can provide a tremendous scope of original essay topics such as changing the ending of a song, finishing a song that ends with no resolution, writing the song from another perspective, or analyzing motives and characters. The sarcastically biting “*Ça m'énerve*” [That drives me nuts], Helmut Fritz's number one song during the summer of 2009, can spark productive debate and opinion essays about the overblown role of fashion in today's youth culture. On the other side of the spectrum, the successful slam poet-



rappers in France, such as GCM (*Grand Corps Malade*) and Abd Al Malik provide reams of exploitable resources for advanced level composition classes, with songs about honor and responsibility (“*C’est du lourd*” [It’s heavy], Malik), love stories being compared to train rides (“*Les Voyages en train*” [Train trips], GCM), the fleeting nature of life (“*Midi vingt*” [Twelve twenty], GCM), being Muslim after September 11<sup>th</sup> (“*Le 12 septembre*” [September 12th], Malik), and many other thought-provoking and emotionally rich songs in which culture, politics, religion, psychology, and countless other disciplines stimulate discussion. Of course, Malik and GCM are not the only slammers and rappers with a message. Many French rap songs address inequalities inherent in French society, life in the *banlieues* or ghettos, race relations, sexism, prejudice against Muslims, etc. A new rap song by Soprano and Black “*Ferme les yeux et imagine-toi*” [Close your eyes and imagine yourself] addresses the relative nature of suffering when compared to that endured by those living in developing countries, asking the listener to close his or her eyes, imagine the untenable conditions of the extremely poor in faraway countries, and to stop complaining and appreciate life:

*Imagine ta vie sans eau potable,  
Une douche les jours de pluie,  
Pas de bouffe ni sur la table  
Imagine-toi dans un hôpital avec une maladie incurable,  
Une maladie qui te juge coupable*

[Imagine your life without drinking water,  
A shower on rainy days,  
No food on the table  
Imagine yourself in a hospital with a terminal disease,  
A disease that makes you ashamed]

In addition to incorporating contemporary songs and music videos as supporting material in a pre-set curriculum, instructors can enhance their classes by teaching a unit on one of the many historically based musicals that have enjoyed tremendous popularity in France. Kamel Ouali’s *Le Roi Soleil* [The Sun King] is a perfect example of an interdisciplinary lesson involving history and French. Ideally, French teachers would introduce the musical when history teachers begin a unit on France in the 1800’s. *Le Roi Soleil* offers a unique perspective on a notorious historical figure, Louis XIV, while integrating contemporary music, modern choreography, and amazingly moving lyrics that appeal to students of all ages. While many students may already be aware of the despotic nature of the monarch reputed to have said “*L’état c’est moi*” [I am the government], this musical allows students to see a more personal side of a legendary French king who was constantly subjected to pressures from his family, fears of rebellion (dating back to *La Fronde*, the terrible civil war that devastated France while Louis was just a child), and the frustrations implied in putting duty before love.

*Le Roi Soleil* offers endless teaching possibilities ranging from lessons on history, grammar, conversation topics, and vocabulary building to discovering new trends in French music and art. Before tackling the musical, it is important to

familiarize students with the main characters and the historical period. Students can research and offer short oral presentations or PowerPoints on Mazarin, Marie Mancini, la Régente (Anne d'Autriche), Monsieur (the king's brother), Madame de Montespan, Madame de Maintenon, Molière, and of course Louis XIV. In addition, students should research and discuss La Fronde, the civil war that made Louis XIV paranoid about power sharing, and the Palace of Versailles. Once students have a good understanding of the nature of the main characters involved in the musical, instructors should distribute the list of songs to be studied, along with vocabulary exercises. The most important songs represent both the best and the worst of human nature: "*Contre ceux d'en haut*" [Against the upper class], "*Être à la hauteur*" [To be up to the task], "*Ça marche*" [It's all good], "*Où ça mène quand on s'aime*" [Where does love lead us], "Requiem Aeternam," "*À qui la faute?*" [Whose fault is it?], "*Je fais de toi mon essentiel*" [You are my essential one] (the most played song in France for over a year), "*S'aimer est interdit*" [Loving each other is forbidden], "*Le ballet des planètes*" [The ballet of planets], and finally "*Pour arriver à moi*" [To get to me].

Students will understand the historical and social context of the play if particular emphasis is placed on the opening monologue by Molière, in which he explains the events and political climate leading up to la Fronde: "*Paris s'apprête à cracher sa colère. Écrasé sous les impôts, le peuple a froid; il a faim; la misère est partout [Acte I]* / Paris is ready to spit out its anger. Crushed by taxes, the people are cold; they are hungry; misery is everywhere [Act I]." Another essential, but non-musical segment to show students is the scene in which the Cardinal Mazarin is on his deathbed, begging Louis for forgiveness and offering him final words of advice: "*Oh sire, je vous ai aimé comme mon propre fils, je vous demande de me pardonner les duretés et les sacrifices que j'ai dû vous imposer mais ils m'étaient toujours dictés par l'intérêt suprême de l'État [Acte I]* / Oh Sire, I loved you like my own son; I ask your pardon for the harshness and sacrifices that I imposed on you but they were dictated to me by the supreme interest of the State" [Act I]. Finally, students should study Louis' speech at his coronation, with his famous quotation "*L'état c'est moi.*" Because these dialogues are difficult in terms of the period language used and the unfamiliar historical context, students should view each short clip two to three times and work on questions (see Appendix B) in groups to share their impressions and interpretations.

The first song, "*Contre ceux d'en haut*" [Against the upper class], is performed during a whimsical re-enactment of a popular uprising and provides an ideal departure point for highlighting the social differences of the era and the rise of the bourgeoisie, first elicited by Molière. Students can reflect on the violence and injustice suffered by the poor at the hands of the privileged classes by picking out images that relate to these themes such as: "*Pour une justice qu'ils ont fait taire / Sous les cris sourds de nos prières / Au nœud coulant d'une main de fer / Qui nous étrangle quand on la serre [Acte I]* / For justice they have drowned / In our voiceless prayers / In the slipknot wielded by an iron fist / That strangles us when they tighten it [Act I]."

The next song gives students their first real impression of Louis XIV's character as he realizes that the weight of the kingdom has just fallen squarely

upon his shoulders with the death of his mentor and chief counselor, Cardinal Mazarin. Teachers can explain the French expression *être à la hauteur* [to be up to the task] by giving examples of contemporary politicians, singers, artists, and other public figures, and by asking students to provide examples of their own. By analyzing the first and the third paragraphs, students should be able to say if Louis XIV was happy to become king of France. In addition, teachers should encourage students to examine Louis' evolution during the song, his uncertainty and fear giving way to resignation and resolution. Teachers should ask students to underline vocabulary that indicates Louis' distress (1<sup>st</sup> paragraph: *le poids, jamais le choix, enfermer* [the weight, never have a choice, to lock up]). Students are often more willing to speak when they can compare what they study with events or emotions in their own life, so teachers can ask students personal questions to elicit empathy, such as: Do you ever feel overwhelmed by your responsibilities? Do your teachers and parents expect too much of you? Give examples.

Teachers will find activities and resources for teaching *Le Roi Soleil* in the appendices of this paper. Video clips are available online, and DVDs are available on amazon.fr in PAL format, viewable on most American computers. While the musical comprises an excellent addition to units on absolutism, it cannot serve as a substitute for a comprehensive history lesson because many elements of Louis XIV's life and times are omitted or glossed over. The advantage of using this musical in the contemporary French classroom is that it gives students an accessible, captivating, and tangible point of comparison for a discussion of historians' views of Louis XIV. Students may also want to learn more about his wife, Marie-Thérèse, as she is practically never mentioned in the play. They may also be disappointed to learn of Louis' irresponsible spending, his constant wars, and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, a document that promoted religious tolerance throughout France. While these important historical facts have no part in the musical, students will retain them and respond to them more profoundly after having developed an attachment to the character presented by Ouali.

Perhaps the most important reason to include contemporary music in foreign language teaching is its emotional appeal and the phenomenon of implicit learning disguised as entertainment. In a follow-up exchange after the survey results were posted, French teacher Rich Emch wrote that he uses rap music and videos to challenge students' preconceived notions of contemporary France, "My students think of France as striped shirts and bérets. To show the French have a 'cool' side, I played the clip "*Célébration*" (2009) as a reward for good work. Later in the day, a student told me she thought the video was 'weird' because the combination of the rapper clothing style, the racial diversity, and the French language was 'unexpected.' In my opinion, students expect Piaf or Charles Trenet, and are shocked when they see and hear styles that highlight French diversity and a dynamic non-white culture. And it helps my non-white students to feel included." Emch's comments reinforce our belief that contemporary music should be a part of the French curriculum at every level. If we teachers can elicit compassionate learning and real intellectual curiosity in students by using music and musicals in conjunction with more conventional methodologies and materials, then we have done our job well.

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## Appendix A

### Teacher Survey

Brief survey sent to teacher members of American Association of French-Ohio.  
 Thirty-three respondents.

1. Do you incorporate classic French music (Piaf, Brassens, Trenet, Montand, etc.) into your curriculum?
2. If so, which singers and which songs?
3. Do you also incorporate modern French music into your classes?
4. How do you stay abreast of current trends and obtain the music?
5. Do you feel it is important to incorporate contemporary music into your classes?
6. If you answered yes to the preceding question, please explain why you feel it is important to do so.

## Appendix B

### Resources for Teaching *Le Roi Soleil*

#### ***L'OUVERTURE: (Travail sur la compréhension orale)***

1. Demander qui connaît les pièces de Molière? Mentionner deux ou trois pièces célèbres qu'il a écrites.
2. Les élèves doivent écouter deux ou trois fois l'ouverture faite par Molière. En groupe, ils doivent comparer leurs impressions, interprétations du monologue.
3. Donner aux élèves les paroles et ensemble parler des résultats de chaque groupe.
4. Questions: que se passe-t-il? Qui est le personnage qui parle? Pourquoi est-il mécontent? Où se trouve le roi? Avec qui?

**CONTRE CEUX D'EN HAUT** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLCVK7XIKJc>)

1. Première impression du spectacle :

- a. Quelles sont les couleurs dans cette chanson? (vocabulaire utilisé: les couleurs)
- b. Le décor (vocabulaire: intéressant, ennuyeux, élaboré, trop chargé...)
2. Qui sont « les gens d'en haut » (la noblesse, l'aristocratie)? « d'en bas » (le peuple)?  
*Note pour le prof : évoquer les différentes couches sociales en France (avant et maintenant) et le pouvoir de l'Église jusqu'à la séparation de l'État et de l'Église en 1905*
3. Que se passe-t-il? (les deux premiers paragraphes : les injustices : lignes 3,4,5,6,7,8)
4. Qui est le représentant du peuple? (le Comte de Beaufort). De quelle classe sociale vient-il? (de la noblesse). Que pensez-vous de cela?
5. Pourquoi sont-ils en colère? À quoi va mener cette colère plus tard? (à la Révolution française)
6. Diviser les étudiants en groupes, et demandez-leur d'analyser la première strophe de la chanson: Pour une couronne qu'on n'aura pas / Un jour meilleur qui ne vient pas / Des champs de blés pilés cent fois / Au nom d'une croix qui fait sa loi.

*Note pour le prof : parler de la Révolution française et de ses raisons principales. Il est possible de montrer la demeure d'un paysan et le château de Versailles pour les comparer*

### **ÊTRE À LA HAUTEUR** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oU5mOgxy8vQ>)

1. Expliquez l'expression « être à la hauteur ». Citez des personnages (hommes/femmes politiques, acteurs/actrices de cinéma...) qui sont à la hauteur et citez-en d'autres qui ne le sont pas.
  - a. Expliquez le 1er et le 3ème paragraphes. Est-il heureux de devenir roi?  
 1ère strophe :  
 Je me lève jour après jour  
 C'est un jour ordinaire  
 J'en connais déjà le cours  
 Le poids d'un parcours nécessaire  
 Que je dois faire  
 Parce qu'on n'a jamais le choix  
 De ses murs, de sa terre  
 Qui nous enferment à l'étroit  
 L'étroit d'une grandeur solitaire  
 Mais pour quoi faire?  
 3ème strophe :  
 C'est un devoir quotidien  
 Un costume qu'il faut mettre  
 Pour un rôle qui ne mène à rien  
 Mais faut-il vraiment s'y soumettre,

Jusqu'à la fin?

- b. Relevez les mots qui vous aident à comprendre le désarroi de Louis XIV (1<sup>er</sup> paragraphe: les mots forts : jour ordinaire, le poids, jamais le choix, enfermement, étroit, grandeur solitaire. 2<sup>ème</sup> paragraphe: les autres attendent, surmonter, à l'appel).
2. Que pensez-vous du 2<sup>ème</sup> paragraphe (le refrain)? Ressentez-vous la même chose dans votre vie de tous les jours? En tant qu'étudiant, qu'est-ce qu'on attend de vous?

Être à la hauteur  
 De ce qu'on vous demande  
 Ce que les autres attendent  
 Et surmonter sa peur  
 D'être à la hauteur  
 Du commun des mortels  
 Pour chaque jour répondre à l'appel  
 Et avoir à coeur  
 D'être à la hauteur

3. De quoi Louis XIV a-t-il peur? (de ne pas être à la hauteur, de ne pas être capable de régner sur le royaume de France)
4. La vidéo:
  - a. Que se passe-t-il dans cette vidéo? (le couronnement de Louis XIV)
  - b. Que pensez-vous de la voix d'Emmanuel Moire?
  - c. Les couleurs, sont-elles différentes de celles de la première chanson? (plus vives)
  - d. Qui couronne le roi? Pourquoi? (le pape / Parce que tous les rois étaient couronnés par le pape – le droit divin des rois)
  - e. Comment est la musique dans la première partie et dans la deuxième? (baroque, moderne)
  - f. Comment sont les costumes et les danseurs?

**ÇA MARCHE** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFLyW2HN-t4>)

1. Comment Monsieur décrit-il la société? Citez ses expressions. (des crabes, des panurges, des requins, des loups, ligne 10, 15)
2. Comment décrit-il le peuple? Citez ses expressions (ligne 17, bergerie)
3. Comment décrit-il l'homme (human being here)? (un animal, une espèce en voie de disparité – jeu de mots sur « en voie de disparition »)
4. La vidéo:
  - a. Comment est Monsieur? (exubérant)
  - b. Son costume (beaucoup de couleur, presque comme celui d'une femme (il était homosexuel))
  - c. Ses cheveux (roux et longs)
  - d. Pourquoi? (un homme frivole, qui veut s'amuser)



- e. Que pensez-vous de la chorégraphie, les acrobates? A quoi cela vous fait-il penser? (le cirque du soleil)

**OÙ ÇA MÈNE QUAND ON S'AIME** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Umfm9kyCQ3g>)

1. De quoi parle cette chanson? (d'amour entre un homme et une femme)
2. Est-ce que leur amour est possible? Pourquoi? (Non, Louis est roi et Marie est une courtisane, une femme sans rang ni sang royal)
3. Qu'est-ce qui vous frappe, vous attire dans cette chanson?
4. Croient-ils que leur amour soit possible ? (ligne 23)
5. De nos jours, est-il facile de se marier avec quelqu'un d'une classe différente?

Expliquer que le roi est parti à la guerre. Il a été blessé et on le croit mort. Voir « Requiem aeternam » juste avant la chanson « À qui la faute? ». C'est donc à Monsieur que revient le trône. En est-il content? Est-il à la hauteur? Pourquoi? Pourquoi pas?

**A QUI LA FAUTE** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cx2oXDDFTLE>)

Avant le visionnement demandez aux élèves de: Chercher les effets comiques, les couleurs, le mouvement, les acrobates.

1. Que veut dire l'expression « prise de tête »?
2. Monsieur est-il content de devenir roi? (non, il veut continuer de s'amuser)
3. Expliquez le 4ème et le 5ème paragraphes. Expliquez la phrase: « Je suis fait pour rien faire / Mais surtout pour bien le faire »
4. Partagez-vous l'avis de Monsieur sur la vie? Est-ce que la vie n'est qu'amusement?

**JE FAIS DE TOI MON ESSENTIEL** ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_zxHtMCInIc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_zxHtMCInIc))

1. Quelle est la différence entre cette mise en scène et celle de « A qui la faute »? (aucune couleur, plus sérieux, noir et blanc)
2. Comment interprétez-vous la scène des miroirs? (libre choix)
3. Quelle est le message de cette chanson? (tout est possible quand on aime)
4. Pourquoi, à votre avis, a-t-elle eu tant de succès en France? (une histoire d'amour, les voix des chanteurs)

**LE BALLET DE PLANETES** ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rr8le6R\\_8j8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rr8le6R_8j8))

1. À voir: qu'en pensez-vous? Montrer aux élèves un clip du Cirque du Soleil pour en faire la comparaison.
2. Demander aux élèves pourquoi on fait un ballet des « planètes » en plein milieu d'un spectacle sur le 17<sup>ème</sup> siècle (les planètes tournent autour du roi soleil).



***POUR ARRIVER À MOI*** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-asDSjaxrGk>)

1. Que veut dire « Pour arriver à moi »? Expliquer cette expression en français.
2. Louis, a-t-il dû faire des sacrifices? Et lesquels? (son amour, ce qu'il voulait vraiment faire)
3. Expliquez le dernier paragraphe. (« Peu importe qui en est / On est seul pendant le jugement dernier / On doit reconnaître ses erreurs. »)

***RÉSUMÉ DE LA PIÈCE***

Faire une critique du spectacle. Positive, négative ou les deux. 250 mots en français

- a. Au lieu de donner tout simplement votre opinion du spectacle, soutenez-la en donnant des exemples précis tirés des catégories suivantes: jeu des acteurs, choix des acteurs, chorégraphie, travail du metteur en scène, décors, chanteurs, danseurs, le mélange de la musique moderne et baroque, voix des chanteurs, paroles, dialogues, monologues, ballades, importance et authenticité historique, personnages historiques.
- b. Répondez aux questions ci-dessous pour mieux organiser votre essai critique:
  - i. Quel est le personnage qui vous a plu le plus et pourquoi?
  - ii. Qui est le meilleur interprète de la pièce? Justifiez votre réponse en fournissant des exemples concrets.
  - iii. Qu'avez-vous appris de nouveau sur le personnage de Louis XIV, avez-vous changé d'opinion?



## 8

### **Gateways to the World: Rationale for Language Choice**

**Rebecca L. Chism**  
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#### **Introduction**

**I**magine being a typical high school upperclassman. You participate in sports or other activities, have a group of friends that you enjoy, and manage to get by in your courses. You would not be considered a star pupil nor would you be considered at-risk. Nonetheless, one characteristic sets you apart from your peers: You have a particular aptitude and interest in foreign languages and cultures. You see a flyer advertising a summer Foreign Language Academy (FLA) to learn a critical language over the course of four weeks in an immersion environment on a college campus. You get to study the language through task-based activities, to live with native and near-native speakers in a dormitory setting, and to participate in a variety of cultural activities and local events. Your days are spent in and out of the classroom engaged with your cohorts; meals are spent using the target language; and, evenings include guest speakers, films, etc. After the summer immersion session, you continue your study of the language throughout the academic year, using computer-mediated communication and other technology-based tasks to facilitate communication and to develop skills in preparation for face-to-face meetings on campus once a month. Not only do you have the opportunity to study a critical language, you can satisfy your high school foreign language credits, take the equivalent of two semesters of the target language at the university-level, and be prepared to continue with university study at the intermediate level.

My colleagues and I at Kent State University (KSU), in collaboration with Oberlin College and Bowling Green State University (BGSU), received over

400 applications from incoming high school juniors and seniors to study Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, or Russian, deemed critical languages, in a Foreign Language Academy sponsored by the Ohio Board of Regents beginning in summer, 2007. We were able to provide students with eight, tuition-free hours of college credit, free room and board for the summer and academic year sessions, and a \$400 stipend to compensate for any lost income from a summer job. We were also able to provide students with a customized laptop computer for the duration of the Academy. This grant was renewed for a second (2008 to 2009) and a third year (2009 to 2010), and Hindi was added to the list of languages offered. Professors from KSU, Oberlin, and BGSU provided instruction and guidance as well as team-taught with graduate students, who were either native or near-native speakers of the target language and who had previous teaching experience. These graduate students also served as residence hall advisors during the summer session.

After advertising the FLA, my colleagues and I were faced with the daunting task of reviewing each of the applications and choosing 50 students per academic year to participate in the Academy. Applicants had to be from Northeast Ohio, not have previously studied the critical language indicated, and have a strong aptitude and/or interest in foreign languages in general. We wanted to give these students an opportunity to further develop as potential language professionals. We were especially interested in those applicants who indicated an interest in majoring in a foreign language or language-related field, such as translation or teaching. They could be an incoming junior or senior from a public, private, or home school, but they had to be willing to meet all the conditions of the FLA for both the summer immersion and scholastic year.

Students submitted their applications, which included general information (parental contact, address, email, sex, and ethnicity), high school graduation date and current class, and intended college major. Two recommendations, from either a foreign language or English teacher or an administrator of language programs and a high school counselor or principal, were also required. The language teacher was asked to rank on a scale from zero to five (five being the highest) the student's academic readiness for college-level coursework in the subject specified, social maturity, ability to study independently, and whether or not s/he would recommend the student for the FLA. Space was provided for additional comments. The high school counselor was also asked to rank the student's social maturity and ability to study independently. In addition, s/he was asked to submit the student's numerical rank in high school class, grade point average, transcripts, ACT/SAT scores, and any other college preparatory units completed by the end of the current academic year. S/he was also asked to recommend the student for the FLA; space was provided for comments. Finally, the students were asked to attach a typed essay of approximately 300 words explaining why they wished to participate in the Language Academy Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program (PSEOP) and their language of choice. Students could rank more than one language option. The personal essays that students wrote were of particular interest to us given the status of critical languages in the world today and provided insight into the students' rationale and motivation for participation in the Academy.

Government and educational institutions use a variety of terms to categorize the teaching and learning of Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian in the United States, such as defense languages, strategic languages, investment languages, and less commonly taught languages. Here the term “critical” is used deliberately by the author to reflect the political and socioeconomic dynamics associated with the study of these languages. This article will first review the emergence of critical languages as related to political and socioeconomic trends. Second, it will analyze the factors motivating students’ participation in the FLA, as gleaned from their application essays, in order to ascertain their interest and willingness to study such languages. Lastly, this article will consider any implications for the study of critical languages as concluded from the experience of the FLA.

### **Critical Languages: An Overview**

Foreign language enrollments and offerings have historically been linked to political and socioeconomic influences and trends. Immigrants to the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth century were prone to abandon their first language/s in favor of English as they adapted to their new environment. However, America’s isolationist and utilitarian tendencies were challenged with the onset of both World War I and especially World War II. These global conflicts necessitated a change in the way languages were learned and taught as well as in which languages were learned and taught. While grammar-translation had been the historical and primary means of language study, it proved to be ineffective in face of the high demand for people to quickly develop speaking and listening skills in critical languages. Thus, the Army Method, or audiolingualism, emerged as the dominant means of language instruction (Curtain & Pesola, 2004). With its origins in behaviorism, this method emphasized repetition and the positive reinforcement of the development of listening and speaking skills and preceded the emergence of other more communicative methodologies. From the World Wars emerged an increased awareness of the role that language and culture play in relation to national security needs and the urgency of encouraging the acquisition of the languages of both allies and enemies. This was confirmed when the peace and prosperity enjoyed by post-war America was shattered by the launching of the satellite Sputnik in 1957 by the Soviet Union. The Cold War presented an immediate threat to American interests and, as a result, the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and its Title VI spurred the increased study of the critical languages of that era, such as German, French, Spanish, and Russian (Curtain & Pesola, 2004). It “aimed to ensure trained manpower of sufficient quality and quantity to meet the national defense needs to the United States” (Stern, 1983, p.105 as cited in Kramsch, 2005, p. 554).

In addition to national security and defense, the necessity for critical language acquisition became tied to economic issues. The 1970s witnessed the growth of multinational corporations and international trade as well as increased American dependence on foreign oil. The President’s Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies’ report, *Strength through Wisdom: A Critique of U.S. Capability* (Perkins, 1980), articulated the defensive and economic necessity for

Americans to know other languages. *A Nation at Risk* (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1984) also highlighted the importance of sociocultural awareness to America's role in the global community. In addition, the influence and proliferation of technology from the mid-1980's to the present have broken down international barriers and have threatened American political and economic dominance in the world. The events of September 11, 2001 and the ongoing fight against terrorism have reinforced the necessity of critical languages. The 2006 National Security Language Initiative states that "An essential component of U.S. national security in the post-Sept. 11 world is the ability to engage foreign governments and peoples, especially in critical regions.... To do this, Americans must be able to communicate in other languages, a challenge for which most of them are totally unprepared" (Powell & Lowenkron, 2006). Thus, this initiative once again highlights the need to promote the study of critical languages.

In light of these sociopolitical and economic needs, the "Board of Regents STEM and Foreign Language Academies [emerged] in response to House Bill 115 of the 126th General Assembly, which appropriated \$13.2 million in FY 07 to support the implementation of the Ohio Core through initiatives designed to increase teacher capacity in mathematics, science and foreign language. Additionally, H.B. 115 provides opportunities for more high school students, particularly those who currently may not aspire to attend college or to study career in the STEM fields, to engage in advanced learning opportunities for college and high school credit in these disciplines" (Ohio Board of Regents, 2009). The Foreign Language Academy was developed under these auspices and focused on critical languages.

As of October 2009, the languages deemed "critical" by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) include the languages offered by the FLA (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian) as well as Hindi, Farsi, Hebrew, Korean, Pashtu, Punjabi, Spanish, Urdu, and Vietnamese. Met (1994) notes that the percentage of students enrolled to study critical languages increased dramatically in the 1990s; however, the overall numbers remained relatively small overall. Met notes:

Only 7354 of the approximately 5 million secondary students currently taking a foreign language study Chinese; 26,442 study Japanese. Enrollments in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian combined account for less than 1 percent of all secondary school foreign language enrollment.... Clearly, the calls for improved language competence found in reports of educational reform are not reflected in what schools offer and what students choose to take... students cannot take a course not offered to them. (p. 155)

The Foreign Language Academy was one way to provide access to these less-commonly taught languages to students who might not otherwise have had the opportunity.

### **Motivation for Critical Language Study**

The 400 plus applications for the Foreign Language Academy affirm that students are willing to take advantage of the option to study one of these languages

when it is made available to them. For example, one applicant in Russian mentioned in his essay that the language was not offered at his school; another in Japanese said she wanted to take another language besides “Spanish and American Sign Language;” and, another said he felt a critical language was “more useful” than the languages offered at his school. Other students described their learning of one or more of these critical languages as “unique,” “more interesting,” “practical,” and “useful.” Two of the applicants in Japanese went so far as to begin self-study stating, “I’ve been wanting to learn Japanese since I was eleven years old.” An applicant in Chinese mentioned having started self-study as well. Many of the applicants across the languages seemed eager for the challenge presented by studying and learning a critical language.

As indicated by their official university websites, of the languages offered by the FLA, only Russian is available as an undergraduate major at KSU, Oberlin, and BGSU; the other languages are offered up to the Intermediate II level. However, the other critical languages are essential components of other programs offered at all three of these institutions. For example, BGSU and Oberlin have majors in East Asian studies; BGSU offers a student exchange program in Japan; and, KSU offers a M.A. and a Ph.D. in translation studies with concentrations in Russian and Japanese. These programs are starting to benefit from the increased interest in the study of critical languages encouraged by the FLA. A number of former FLA students have continued their studies at the undergraduate level at KSU. The enrollments in Russian have increased by 40% since the inception of the Academy, and the other critical languages offered at KSU are seeing growth in their enrollments as well.

When students applied for the FLA, there were many attractors in addition to the opportunity to study a critical language. The factor most often cited in the students’ application essays was the opportunity to live and study on a college campus. In addition to the opportunity to experience life on a college campus, many students cited the opportunity for high school and college credit. Several applicants acknowledged how earning credits would help with the high cost of education. Others noted that the, “college credits are a plus for doing something you love to do,” while one wrote it was a “useful way to spend my summer vacation.”

While some students mentioned their desire to study the language itself in college, their passion for languages, and their desire to be fluent in more than one language, others told of their overall interest in language development and linguistics. For example, one student stated, “Whenever I hear a foreign language being spoken or see it being written, I always want to find out about the origins of the language and how it came to exist.” Several of the applicants for Chinese and Japanese were interested in how the characters came to be. One asked if a character represents an idea or a single word and if there is any relationship between the characters of the two languages. Some were intrigued by the artistry of calligraphy. Another was particularly fascinated by dialects. Some noted that their study of Arabic would enhance their current study of Spanish, or that learning another language would help them learn English better. Others expressed their

desire to be able to speak fluently. For example, a Russian applicant wanted to be able to teach her children the language one day. While others, like a ham radio operator, just wanted to understand the different languages they heard. Finally, others were more interested in the target culture. One student felt Japanese was a "beautiful" language and that the culture was "fascinating."

Those who were not necessarily interested in studying languages as a major acknowledged how acquisition of a critical language could enhance their career options and choices. Others recognized the inherent economic competition represented by China, Japan, and Russia. For example, some of the students' comments included, "China is becoming a superpower," "high tech jobs are in China," "China is now dominating," "Japan is surpassing us in our economy," and "Japan is a center of business." They also recognized the tremendous population growth in other parts of the world, particularly in China. Prospective engineers, medical doctors, astronauts, FBI agents, and military all mentioned how the knowledge of one of these languages would enable them to have increased access to information and personal contacts.

Applicants also seemed to view their awareness of the language and its culture as a means of collaboration and communication. For instance, students stated, "I want to be able to work with others on projects to better mankind," "I will likely be working in my field with people from China," and, "I might be living there someday." Almost all of the applicants mentioned their desire to either visit, study, or live in one of these countries, and how an experience abroad would benefit them. They were very interested in meeting people from other cultures. In general, the applicants recognized the necessity of engaging in the "real world" and their desire to travel and experience things for themselves. Some applicants had already had such experiences, such as participation in the People-to-People program. Several were influenced by a personal acquaintance or encounter with someone from a country where a critical language is spoken. For example, one applicant had a Japanese friend with whom she wanted to communicate, while another was influenced by a Chinese couple she met. One applicant's family had hosted a Russian exchange student, while another applicant met someone from the Ukraine at a YMCA camp. Still other students had met someone at work or through volunteering. Northeast Ohio has a significant Slavic population, so some applicants mentioned their heritage or ancestry as the reason behind their desire to study Russian. One applicant in Arabic noted that it is the language of her religion. Another applicant in Chinese was impressed by the fact that the two Democratic candidates in the most recent presidential election knew two languages.

Students seemed aware of the power of language and cultural awareness to "bridge the gap," to "respect the customs and not offend anyone," and to "not judge anyone." Some mentioned their desire to be "cultured and educated," "to have a better life experience," and to "be a better person." Applicants for Arabic frequently mentioned the unrest in the Middle East and how they would like "better access to what is really going on there," while two applicants specifically cited a general mistrust of the media and their representation of the situation there. Sometimes students did not have accurate information. One believed that



there was a “U.S. occupation of the Middle East” but expressed his desire to have a “better understanding” of the dynamics there. Others obviously did their homework and cited statistics in their essays, “with 160 million native speakers and 110 million second-language speakers, Russian ranks on the top ten list of the most spoken languages worldwide.” Several of the Russian applicants indicated their desire to better understand the political situation there and were interested in resolving world conflicts. Others also noted their interest in Russian culture, literature, and history as motivating factors.

Across all the languages, Japanese culture and cultural artifacts were frequently brought up. In addition to Japanese popular music, television, film and art, Anime and Manga are very popular with young people. Some applicants also indicated that they participate in Kendo or other forms of martial arts. One applicant said she was “enthralled by all things Japanese” and that this encouraged her interest in learning the language.

These application letters provided insight into the motivation behind the students’ desire to participate in the FLA. The Academy was designed to maximize student interest by providing an immersion setting in which to fully experience the academic, cultural, and social aspects of the critical language under study.

### **The Foreign Language Academy**

The FLA began on move-in day. Students and their parents were welcomed and the final paperwork was completed before an opening dinner and ceremony at the student center. The ceremony consisted of an Arabic singer/musician, a Japanese drumming group, and a Russian balalaika choir. The Chinese culture was represented with chopsticks and displays of cultural artifacts. The students moved into the newer dorms on campus with native and near-natives speakers serving as their instructors and resident hall advisors. They were able to benefit from the campus facilities, including the dining hall and recreation center, and local events.

Students typically spent their mornings in classrooms located within the dormitory facility. They had a professor from KSU, BGSU, or Oberlin as their primary instructor, who worked in conjunction with another instructor and the resident hall advisor for additional support. Classroom activities focused on task-based activities and the development of the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. After lunch with their language cohorts, students continued to engage in immersion activities before a two-hour afternoon break, which students used for resting, socializing, exercising, etc., before dinner. The evenings were occupied with more culturally-focused events, such as films, dance, talks, etc. Students also had time for homework and study sessions before they were to report to their rooms for the remainder of the evening. Students went home on the weekends, from late Friday afternoon until early Sunday evening. The Fourth of July was a bit problematic in that it fell on a weekday and many of the campus services were closed for the holiday; however, our instructors generously offered to host dinners at their homes for which the students cooked dishes native to the target culture and used the target language.

After just two weeks in an immersion environment, I witnessed students at the Arabic dinner issuing and comprehending basic commands and demonstrating culturally relevant dining practices. They were able to identify the dishes they made, the ingredients in them, and the recipes for them. Arabic satellite television was on in the background, and students were naturally curious about events and broadcasts. Thus, not only did students experience aspects of college life, the immersion environment also provided them with an opportunity to bond with their cohorts and their instructors and to engage in task-based learning activities both inside and outside of the classroom. Students also benefited from access to the latest technologies and classroom facilities available on campus. For example, they were provided with customized laptop computers to engage in the target language in synchronous and asynchronous activities. The four weeks passed very quickly; however, students had clearly bonded with their cohorts and instructors by the end of the session.

Closing ceremonies consisted of the students demonstrating their new language skills: Arabic students performed a song/dance, Chinese students acted in a play, Japanese students learned drumming, and Russian students sang and played musical instruments. The experience helped the students bond with both their classmates and their instructors and proved to be an important factor in students' desires to continue their study of the language. The immersion environment provided an important foundation for the second level of language instruction during the academic year, which consisted of online communicative activities and a face-to-face meeting once a month. Many of the Academy's first students have returned in the two subsequent summers to serve as mentors for the newer students.

### **Implications for Critical Language Instruction**

According to Gardner, motivation refers to "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language" (as cited in Romanov, 2000, p. 143). Overall, the students applying to the FLA seemed to display traits of both integrative and instrumental motivation. First, they appeared to recognize the importance of critical languages as related to political and socioeconomic necessity. This could be categorized as instrumental motivation; that is, motivation that is associated with the language's utility. Students expressed their desires to obtain college credit, to have access to good job opportunities, and to better understand world events. Second, students also expressed their own personal interests and reasons for the study of a critical language, including social and travel experiences and to learn more about the history, art, literature, music, sport, culture, and heritage associated with the target language. This could be categorized as integrative motivation. Many of the students knew the FLA would involve a lot of work, but they were excited nonetheless. One applicant in Chinese wrote that he "promised to work hard and was looking forward to it nonstop."

Although the interest in the study of critical languages is apparent, there are several factors to consider in implementing critical language programming. First, although there is an emerging trend in offering more of these languages at the secondary- and university-level, it is often difficult to find qualified instructors. One ill-fated solution has been to bring in native speakers directly from the target country without the proper training and instruction in how to educate American students. The pedagogy of language instruction varies widely across countries, and American students are often unaccustomed to the teacher-centered, authoritarian approach common in other cultures. This is why teacher training plays a vital role in the instruction of critical languages. Although many of our instructors for the FLA had previous experience teaching in the American classroom, we hosted a workshop specifically on task-based instruction. We provided reading materials to the instructors, and a master teacher and author lead the instructors in the explanation, brainstorming, and development of projects. We also held another workshop on the uses of technology in the classroom, particularly computer mediated communication forums, including but not limited to email, message boards, chat rooms, Skype, Audacity, and social networks. This was extremely important in the FLA context as the students' access to customized laptops increased the likelihood that they would participate in the task-based learning assignments in both synchronous and asynchronous manners.

A second consideration was the amount of time recommended to devote to the learning of critical languages. Malone states, "languages that are exceptionally difficult for English speakers, such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and Korean, require an average of 88 weeks, or 2,200 hours...to reach level 3" [defined as general professional proficiency, according to the Federal Interagency Language Roundtable (2009)] (as cited in *International Education and Foreign Languages: Keys to Securing America's Future*, 2007, p.45). In light of this, the immersion setting of the FLA provided an opportunity to facilitate and to maximize the time needed to devote to the learning of critical languages and provided a more thorough and intensive educational experience.

Lastly, instructors and students should be aware of the difficulty of studying critical languages. While the FLA application letters indicated students' awareness of the challenges, some had been pushed by their parents to apply and ultimately rebelled, requiring disciplinary action. Other students found that the study of the critical language was much more difficult than they had anticipated and became very frustrated. They needed lots of extra encouragement and assistance. Students were required to pass the first level of instruction before they could continue, and a few students ended up dropping after the summer session. Overall, the majority of the students was successful within the context of the FLA and was especially proud to have risen to the challenge. Many expressed their desire to continue their study of the language and how the FLA gave them the confidence to do so.

## **Conclusion**

At the end of the summer immersion session of the FLA, students were asked to write thank-you letters to their instructors. These letters were submitted via

email and compiled into a booklet and presented to the instructors at the closing ceremony. The students' comments reflected their experience with the Academy. Many of the students either wrote their entire letter in the target language or they wrote a few phrases or their name. They discussed their favorite memories as well as their impressions. For example, a student from Arabic wrote, "the experience here has been amazing.... I never expected to be able to gain an elementary understanding of a language in such a short time. But it somehow seemed to happen." Another student commented:

This experience has far exceeded my expectations for the program. Upon my arrival to the Academy, I felt very unsure and skeptical about my abilities to learn a language in just four weeks. However, after almost three weeks I feel like I have learned more in Chinese than I learned in Latin for three years at my high school. I also feel as if I have reached more of my potential through this program. Much of my time at high school I feel as if I am not being challenged enough.... I love the challenge, and I feel a true sense of accomplishment when I understand what is being said and am able to respond in Chinese.

A student in Russian noted:

If it was not for this amazing summer program, I would not have had access to the knowledge of the Russian language that I have desired for a long time and have never been able to grasp on my own. After just the first amazing week of this program, I feel like I had learned about a month of information. Now after three weeks of learning Russian I can feel that I can say that this program has giving [sic] me an interest in languages that I never thought would be possible. I also feel much more confident in myself after being able to learn almost two to three months of Russian in only three weeks.... This has also been the most fun that I've ever had in the summer and I hate the fact that it has gone by so fast. This program has extremely boosted my interest of the culture, language and history of Russia that I have started to think of actually becoming a literary translator of new and old Russian literature.

In fact, the majority of the participants emerged from the FLA with an increased love and understanding of the critical language, its culture, and its people. They began to feel confident in their abilities and started to ponder new directions for their futures and will surely act as ambassadors for the critical language they studied.

This article began with an imaginary scenario of a high school student seeing a flyer advertising the FLA. This article will now conclude with an excerpt from one of the thank-you letters:

Imagine—if you can—stepping through a door and into a classroom. In this class room is a white board, where strange characters—ones that hold completely no meaning to you—are written. Now imagine, in just one week, you can now read these characters with a decent understanding

of what it means. In just one week, you have been able to master the characters in one of the three Japanese alphabets.... The FLA at KSU has not only helped create a bridge to understanding, but a bridge that could support a spectacular future. It holds so many possibilities for each and every person who had the opportunity to be included in this program, for each and every person who got the chance to learn a language.

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